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ABSTRACT

This congressional hearing focuses on a General Accounting Office (GAO) examination of the Department of Labor's management of Job Corps recruitment and placement contractors. Its focuses are how the contractors demand and measure success in two of the four strategy areas--client commitment and client placement in a job with long-term potential--and the need pointed out in the study's results for a stronger focus on performance and accountability in both areas. Testimony includes statements, letters, and other materials submitted for the record by the following: Representatives in Congress from the States of Virginia, Tennessee, Connecticut, and New York; Associate Directors, Education and Employment Issues, GAO; Deputy Inspector General and Assistant Inspector General, Department of Labor (DOL); Director, Office of Job Corps, DOL; and individuals representing the Clearfield Job Corps Center; Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center; and David L. Carrasco Job Corps Center. (YLB)

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ED 431 916

JOB CORPS OVERSIGHT: RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT STANDARDS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

OCTOBER 23, 1997

Serial No. 105–112

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JOB CORPS OVERSIGHT: RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT STANDARDS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1997

House of Representatives,
Subcommittee on Human Resources,
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher Shays, (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Shays, Snowbarger, Pappas, Towns, Barrett and Kucinich.

Also present: Lawrence J. Halloran, staff director and counsel; J. Vincent Chase, chief investigator; R. Jared Carpenter, clerk; Cherri Branson, minority counsel; and Ellen Rayner, minority chief clerk.

Mr. Snowbarger [presiding]. Good morning. I think we will go ahead and get started. The chairman, Congressman Shays, is at another meeting right now, so in his absence, I will be chairing the meeting, at least for the first hour or so.

We will start with the opening statements. The chairman has a statement that he wanted read into the record, so I will do that for him at this point.

Last year this subcommittee heard informative, moving testimony from men and women whose lives had been transformed by job training that works. They described their difficult, very different journeys, from unemployment to the limitless world of work, self-esteem and self-reliance.

Why did they succeed where so many fail? Well, according to the General Accounting Office, four common strategies or best practices mark successful employment training: ensuring client commitment, removing barriers to employment, improving employability skills and linking skill training to the local job market.

As a part of our oversight mission, we are committed to measure other job training efforts against those standards. We asked the GAO to study the largest federally administered job training program, Job Corps, to determine the extent to which those strategies are present and how they might be spread throughout that $1.2 billion endeavor.

Specifically, GAO examined the Department of Labor's management of Job Corps recruitment and placement contractors, asking how they demand and how they measure success in two of the four strategy areas: client commitment and placing that client in a job with long-term potential.

The results of the GAO study, released today, point to the need for a stronger focus on performance and accountability in both areas.

Job Corps is unique among the 163 federally funded job training programs, mandated to provide an unusually intensive regimen, usually in a residential setting, to prepare at-risk young men and women for a good job and a better life. It costs about $18,000 to house and train the average Job Corps participant, with more than 60,000 young people moving through the program each year.

So unique a program demands unique efforts to assess the readiness of those who would enroll. And so intensive a program should produce demonstrably positive outcomes for those who stay the course.

But, according to both GAO and the Department of Labor Inspector General, high drop-out rates may mean that contractors are not being careful enough about who gets into Job Corps, while poor job placements mean we can't be sure what they're getting out of it. We look to the department and other witnesses, Job Corps contractors, center operators and a graduate, for suggestions to improve these two long-standing problems.

Successful job training programs achieve much because they strive for much. For more than 30 years, the Job Corps has given young people a chance to strive, to reach beyond past failures and present disadvantages. It is not a chance everyone is prepared to make and not every Job Corps student will find a job. But the program, as it has in the past, should strive for more and achieve more, through better recruitment and stronger job placements, two indispensable hallmarks of job training that work.

Welcome to all of you. We look forward to the testimony of all of our witnesses today.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Christopher Shays follows:]

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Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays

October 23, 1997

Last year this Subcommittee heard informative, moving testimony from men and women whose lives had been transformed by job training that works. They described their difficult, very different journeys from dependence and failure to the limitless world of work, self-esteem, and self-reliance.

Why did they succeed where so many fail? According to the General Accounting Office, (GAO) four common strategies, or best practices, mark successful employment training: ensuring client commitment, removing barriers to employment, improving employability skills, and linking skill training to the local job market.

As a part of our oversight mission, we committed then to measure other job training efforts against those standards. We asked the GAO to study the largest federally administered training program, Job Corps, to determine the extent to which those strategies are present, and how they might be spread, throughout that $1.2 billion endeavor.

Specifically, GAO examined the Department of Labor's (DoL) management of Job Corps recruitment and placement contractors, asking how they demand, and how they measure, success in two of the four strategic areas: client commitment and placing that client into a job with long term potential.

The results of the GAO study, released today, point to the need for a stronger focus on performance, and accountability, in both areas.

Job Corps is unique among the 163 federally funded job training programs, mandated to provide an "unusually intensive" regimen, usually in a residential setting, to prepare at-risk young men and women for a good job and a better life. It costs about $18,000 to house and train the average Job Corps participant, with more than 60,000 young people moving through the program each year.

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So unique a program demands unique efforts to assess the readiness of those who would enroll. And so intensive a program should produce demonstrably positive outcomes for those who stay the course.

But, according to both the GAO and the DoL Inspector General, high drop out rates may mean contractors are not being careful enough about who gets into Job Corps, while poor job placements mean we can't be sure what they're getting out of it. We look to the Department, and our other witnesses, Job Corps contractors, center operators and a graduate, for suggestions to improve these two to longstanding problems.

Successful job training programs achieve much because they strive for much. For more than thirty years, the Job Corps has given young people a chance to strive, to reach beyond past failures and present disadvantages. It's not a chance everyone is prepared to make, and not every Job Corps student will find a job. But the program, as it has in the past, should strive for more, and achieve more, through better recruitment and stronger job placements, two indispensable hallmarks of job training that works.

Welcome. We look forward to your testimony.

Mr. Snowbarger. Mr. Towns.

Mr. Towns. Thank you very much. Please convey to the chairman that I appreciate him holding this hearing today.

A former Labor Secretary referred to Job Corps as the jewel in the crown of job training programs. I agree with that assessment because of the comprehensive mix of integrated and coordinated services provided by this program to a population of young people who face multiple barriers to employment.

According to a 1996 GAO report, a successful employment project will have four components. It will ensure that participants are committed to training and getting a job. It will assist participants in removing barriers that could limit the clients' ability to finish training and get and keep a job. It will improve the participants' employability skills—dependability, promptness, cooperation and conflict resolution. And finally, it will link occupational skills training with the local labor market.

It appears that Job Corps has accomplished these four components and we say it is a job well done. Job Corps services include intensive remedial education, vocational training, social skills training, work experience, counseling, health care, day care and substance abuse programs.

Job Corps centers are operated by private industry with contracting arrangements carried out through cost reimbursements and fixed fees. Many sites are run by the nonprofit educational subsidiaries of large corporations. Job Corps links the most unlikely players—the government, private industry and labor unions. This cooperation has allowed the program to serve more than 1.7 million disadvantaged young people since 1964.

Some people are troubled by Job Corps' 33 percent drop-out rate and that is all they want to talk about. Nationally, a little over one-third of the 63,000 who enroll annually do not complete their vocational training.

I must say I am not troubled by the drop-out rate because I know four things. The drop-out rate for private vocational training is 50 percent, and I repeat, the drop-out rate for private vocational training is 50 percent. Job Corps takes troubled young people and provides them with stability, shelter and supervision. And those who do complete their vocational program are five times more likely to obtain a training-related job. They also get a job with a wage that is 25 percent higher than that earned by non-Job Corps attendees.

Therefore, although a 33 percent drop-out rate sounds high, let us not forget that the success rate is almost 70 percent. And I think that when you think about that, it sounds a little better.

Finally, in closing, let me say that it costs $20,000 to house, clothe, feed and train a Job Corps student. It costs $22,900 to incarcerate an inmate in Federal prison. Let us not be naive. Job Corps serves the population of young people most likely to end up in prison—the young male, urban, high school drop-outs who have never held previous employment. I believe that Job Corps gives these young people an opportunity to contribute to society by becoming taxpayers and responsible citizens.

As a matter of fact, a 1982 study by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., showed that Job Corps returns $1.46 in benefits to society for every $1 invested. As a member of a committee whose mission is to ensure economy and efficiency in government programs, it seems to me that Job Corps should be praised for its use of governmental resources. I would be proud to have a Job Corps center in my district and I am going to work hard to be able to get one, one day.

Mr. Chairman, on that note, I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Edolphus Towns follows:]

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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT

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OPENING STATEMENT

REP. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

OCTOBER 23, 1997

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today's hearing on the Job Corps Program. A former Labor Secretary referred to Job Corps as the "jewel in the crown" of job training programs. I agree with that assessment because of the comprehensive mix of integrated and coordinated services provided by this program to a population of young people who face multiple barriers to employment.

According to a 1996 GAO report, a successful employment project will have four components: (1) it will ensure that participants are committed to training and getting a job; (2) it will assist participants in removing barriers that could limit the clients' ability to finish training and get and keep a job; (3) it will improve the participants' employability skills (e.g. dependability, promptness, cooperation and conflict resolution); and (4) it will link occupational skills training with the local labor market. It appears that Job Corps has accomplished these four components. Job Corps services include: intensive remedial education; vocational training; social skills training; work experience; counseling; health care; day care; and substance abuse programs.

Job Corps centers are operated by private industry with contracting arrangements carried out through cost reimbursements and fixed fees. Many sites are run by the nonprofit educational subsidiaries of large corporations. Job Corps links the most unlikely players: the government, private industry and labor unions. This cooperation has allowed the program to serve more than 1.7 million disadvantaged young people since 1964.

Some people are troubled by Job Corps' 33% drop out rate. Nationally, a little over one third of the 63,000 students who enroll annually do not complete their vocational training. I am not troubled by the drop out rate because I know four things: the drop out rate for private vocational training is 50 percent; Job Corps takes troubled young people and provides them with stability, shelter and supervision; and those who do complete their vocational program, are five times more likely to obtain a training related job. They also get a job with a wage that is 25% higher than that earned by non-Job Corps attendees. Therefore, although a 33% drop out rate

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Finally, in closing Mr Chairman, let me say that it cost $20,000 to house, clothe, feed and train a Job Corp student It cost $22,900 to incarcerate an inmate in Federal prison Let use not be naive Job Corps serves the population of young people most likely to end up in prison- the young, male, urban, high school drop outs who have never held previous employment I believe that Job Corps gives these young people an opportunity to contribute to society by becoming tax payers and responsible citizens As a matter of fact, a 1982 study by the Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., showed that Job Corps returns $1 46 in benefits to society for every $1 invested As a member of a committee whose mission is to ensure economy and efficiency in government programs, it seems to me that Job Corps should be praised for its use of governmental resources I would be proud to have a Job Corps center in my district

Again, I want to thank you for holding today's hearing and look forward to hearing the testimony of the witnesses

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Mr. SNOWBARGER. Thank you, Mr. Towns.

If you all would excuse us for a minute, we have some housekeeping details to take care of. First, I ask unanimous consent that all members of the subcommittee be permitted to place any opening statement in the record and that the record remain open for 3 days for that purpose. Without objection, so ordered.

I ask further unanimous consent that all witnesses be permitted to include their written statements in the record, and without objection, so ordered.

I also ask for unanimous consent to place in the hearing record correspondence from Representative Harold E. Ford from Tennessee and Representative Tom Davis from Virginia expressing support for the Job Corps program. Without objection, so ordered.

[The correspondence of Hon. Harold E. Ford and Hon. Thomas M. Davis follow:]

HAROLD E. FORD, JR.
9th District, Tennessee

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and Life-Long Learning
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October 22, 1997

The Honorable Christopher Shays
Chairman, Subcommittee on Human Resources
B372 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you prepare for your oversight hearing on Job Corps on October 23, 1997, I would like to reiterate my support for this national program. I also would like to thank you for the efforts to enhance it so that many more of our country's youth can benefit from all that Job Corps has to offer. Each year, more than 60,000 young men and women enter Job Corps' primarily residential centers to secure the educational, vocational and social skills they need to become productive members of society.

The State of Tennessee is fortunate to have two Job Corps Centers: the Jacobs Creek Center located in Bristol and the Memphis Center. The citizens of Memphis and I are excited to have a Job Corps Center located in our city, and we eagerly await the arrival of the first students. As a matter of fact, as I am writing this letter, there are representatives from the Department of Labor on site assessing the Center's start-up progress, program preparation, and facility construction to determine the its state of readiness to serve the youth of Memphis. I am pleased to echo and support the Department of Labor's procedure designed to ensure that all systems are in place to provide the students with exceptional facilities, programs and well trained and qualified staff prior to Center opening.

When construction is completed, the Center will be in the vanguard of providing youth with the skills they need to compete in the technology-based 21st century marketplace. Memphis possesses one of the largest concentrations of hospitals in the nation, as well as an unparalleled telecommunications infrastructure. The Memphis Center will educate young people to enter these growth industries. Residents will be prepared to enter medical technology and assistance professions as well as computer technology, accounting, electrician, manufacturing and building trades.

The operator, MINACT, INC., is a successful and experienced minority contractor which operates several Job Corps Centers around the country. Its CEO and founder is a Memphis native. In order to fulfill its mission, the Center will employ 113 staff members, most from the geographical area surrounding the Center. The confluence of features which the Job Corps program brings to the table makes it truly an all around "winning" program.

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The efforts made by Job Corps administrators and center operators to continuously improve the quality of service to young people has been well documented and impressive. While the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 is new to most agencies, Job Corps had an extensive system of measurements and accountability for almost 20 years. I applaud your efforts to review the recruitment and placement standards in light of strengthening its 32-year history of success in serving our country's most at-risk youth.

I respectfully request that this letter be incorporated into the official hearings record on Job Corps slated for Thursday, October 23, 1997 by the House Subcommittee on Human Resources.

Sincerely,

Harold E. Ford, Jr.
Member of Congress

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THOMAS M. DAVIS
11th District, Virginia

COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT
Chairman
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Subcommittee on Government Management,
Information and Technology

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October 21, 1997

The Honorable Christopher Shays
Chairman
Subcommittee on Human Resources
U.S. House Of Representatives
B372 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you proceed in conducting your oversight hearing of Job Corps to examine the program's recruitment and placement services, I would like to reiterate my support for this national program. Each year, some 63,000 young and disadvantaged youths enter Job Corps' residential campuses to secure education and training to obtain entry-level jobs. As a result, 75% of those completing the program start jobs, enter the military or pursue further education.

Virginia's three Job Corps centers - the Blue Ridge Job Corps Center in Marion; Flatwoods Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center in Coeburn; and Old Dominion Job Corps Center in Monroe - serve more than 1,100 students annually. According to the General Accounting Office, an additional 500 Virginia youths attend centers outside of our Commonwealth due to insufficient in-state capacity to meet their needs. The efforts made by Job Corps administrators and campus operators to continuously improve the quality of service to young people has been well documented and impressive.

I support your efforts to enhance and enrich the Job Corps so it can serve more young people throughout the nation. The tremendous need to provide a residential and comprehensive program like Job Corps, added to the consistently positive results demonstrated throughout the program's 32-year history, make clear that Job Corps needs and deserves our support.

With warm regards, I remain,

Sincerely,

Tom Davis

Tom Davis
Member of Congress

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Mr. SNOWBARGER. Our first panel today is Ms. Cornelia Blanchette, accompanied by Sigurd Nilsen; also, Patricia A. Dalton accompanied by John Getek. As we do with all witnesses before the committee, I would ask that you rise and take an oath.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Just for the record, the witnesses have responded affirmatively.

Please have a seat and, as I indicated with the unanimous consent request, all your full statements will be put in the record and any other information, please feel free to ask as we go through. I believe, with that, we will start with Ms. Blanchette.

STATEMENTS OF CORNELIA BLANCHETTE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ISSUES, U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, ACCOMPANIED BY SIGURD R. NILSEN, PH.D., ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ISSUES; AND PATRICIA A. DALTON, DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, ACCOMPANIED BY JOHN GETEK, ASSISTANT INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Members of the subcommittee, we are pleased to be here today to discuss the selection and placement of Job Corps participants. My testimony is based on the Job Corps report being released today that we prepared at the request of the subcommittee, as well as on other reports we have issued over the past 2 years.

Job Corps provides comprehensive services in a residential setting to severely disadvantaged clientele with multiple employment barriers at an average cost of over $15,000 per participant. In spite of this considerable investment, about 25 percent of the participants drop out within 60 days and 57 percent of those who leave the program do so without completing their vocational training. However, those who remain in the program and complete their vocational training obtain higher skill jobs at better wages.

In summary, Job Corps needs to improve the selection of program participants to reduce the early drop-out rate. It needs to identify individuals from among its eligible population of about 6 million who have the commitment, attitude and motivation to complete the training and benefit from Job Corps' comprehensive services.

We found that Job Corps' policy guidance for 2 of the 11 eligibility criteria is ambiguous and incomplete. We also found that the most successful outreach and admissions contractors use procedures to assess applicants' degree of commitment and to give applicants a realistic basis for deciding whether to enroll in the program.

Further, our work has raised questions about the accuracy and relevancy of Job Corps' reported job placement rates and the extent to which placements are related to the training participants received. These flawed measures jeopardize the ability of Job Corps and ultimately the Department of Labor to determine whether strategic goals are being achieved.

In order to be eligible for Job Corps, applicants must meet 11 criteria that relate to age, economic status, education or training needs, environment, health history, behavioral adjustment history, capability and aspirations, U.S. resident status, child care provisions, parental consent and Selective Service registration. Job Corps' policy guidance for 2 of the 11 criteria is ambiguous and incomplete.

With respect to the environment criterion, Job Corps' policy guidance does not define a key term used to describe one of the features of a qualifying environment and it limits eligibility to a set of factors that does not include another qualifying environmental feature specified in the law.

With respect to capability and aspiration, Job Corps does not provide sufficient guidance for outreach and admissions contractors to determine whether applicants meet this criterion. Without complete and unambiguous guidance on the meaning of each criterion and how to assess applicants with respect to each criterion, outreach and admissions contractors must rely on their own interpretations. As a result, they may not be enrolling the most appropriate applicants, thereby potentially contributing to the high drop-out rate.

We found that contractors with lower drop-out rates took steps to identify applicants with the commitment and motivation to remain in the program. The more successful contractors' procedures included commitment checks that were designed to test applicants' initiative. For example, applicants interested in Job Corps are required to set up application appointments, arrive for their meetings dressed in proper attire, submit written statements explaining why they wanted to participate in the program and what they hoped to accomplish and call weekly to determine the status of their applications. While not practical in every situation, pre-enrollment tours of Job Corps centers and briefings were used to give applicants a realistic basis for deciding whether they wanted to enroll in the program.

Job Corps uses performance measures to evaluate program performance and to make contract renewal decisions. However, two of the measures Labor uses in assessing placement contractor performance are not meaningful. One, placement in jobs, holds contractors accountable for placing participants who are realistically unemployable. These include participants who are in the program for as little as 1 day, those who were AWOL and those who were kicked out for using drugs or committing violent acts. This could lead to an understatement of actual performance. At the same time, however, the job placement measure could be overstating performance. Our previous work showed that many reported placements could not be confirmed.

A second measure, placement in training-related occupations, probably overstates performance, as well. According to Labor guidance, a job training match results when a participant is placed in a job requiring skills similar to those included in the participant's training. Placement contractors are responsible for recording this information. However, Labor's guidance provides a wide range of jobs that would be considered a training match for the various training categories and includes jobs that appear to bear little, if any, relationship to the training received and, in some instances, appear to require relatively little training. For example, training-related placements could include someone trained as an automobile mechanic and getting a job as a key cutter, trained as a cook and getting a job as a car hop, or trained as a heavy equipment operator and getting a job as a porter.

Because of these shortcomings, we are uncertain as to how well Job Corps is performing with regard to placements. Labor has told us that it is revising the methodology for determining job training matches and hopes to have the new methodology in place by July 1, 1998.

I would now like to talk briefly about the Job Corps' performance measures under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. The strategic plan submitted by Labor's Employment and Training Administration appropriately includes the role of Job Corps within its mission and the strategic goal of increasing the participation of at-risk youth in the work force, resulting in self-sufficiency.

However, ETA's measure for the two performance goals related to Job Corps could be improved. The plan identifies proposed performance measures for one of the goals but not the other. It states that performance indicators for the goal of increasing job retention and earnings will eventually include post-program job retention and post-program earnings gains. Job Corps is in the process of developing these indicators by collecting data over the next 2 years to develop baseline measures. In the interim, its proposed measures for program years 1998 and 1999 included placement rates and placement wages. As we noted previously, we question the validity of placement rates as currently determined. In addition, while wages provide some measure of program success, an additional indicator of program quality that would be useful is an improved measure of job training match.

The second goal, enhancing employability and increasing educational attainment, has no related performance indicators included in ETA's strategic plan. Nonetheless, Job Corps' current performance measurement system contains measures directly related to the second goal. These include measures of functional literacy, GED attainment, and vocational completion. In our opinion, measures such as these would be useful as performance indicators for the second goal.

In conclusion, for Job Corps to be most effective, it is imperative that outreach and admissions contractors select from among Job Corps' eligible population applicants who both need Job Corps' comprehensive services and have the commitment, attitude and motivation to complete the training. Furthermore, without meaningful and accurate performance information, Labor's ability to effectively manage the program is jeopardized.

In our report being released today, we make several recommendations to the Secretary of Labor to help ensure that Job Corps uses its resources to serve the most appropriate participants. Labor disagreed with our recommendation that it clarify and expand its program eligibility guidance, indicating that sufficient policy guidance had been provided.

Although Labor expressed some concern with our remaining recommendations, it acknowledged that they had merit and warranted consideration and it identified actions that it would take.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, this concludes my prepared statement. We would be happy to answer any questions you have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Blanchette follows:]

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are pleased to be here today to discuss Job Corps, a $1 billion program administered by the Department of Labor that serves youths aged 16 to 24 who are economically disadvantaged, in need of additional education or training, and living under disorienting conditions, such as in a disruptive homelife. The 109 Job Corps centers are operated under contracts with Labor, which also issues contracts for outreach and admissions and placement services. Job Corps is the nation's most expensive job training program with an average cost of more than $15,000 per participant. Reasons for this high cost include that the program serves a severely disadvantaged clientele with multiple barriers to employment and that it provides a comprehensive array of services in a residential setting. In spite of this considerable investment, about 25 percent of the participants in the program drop out within 60 days, and 57 percent of those who leave the program do so without completing their vocational training. In contrast, those who remain in the program and complete their vocational training obtain higher-skill jobs at better wages.

My testimony today focuses on how Labor can improve the selection of Job Corps participants and how it can improve the information it has available on program placements in order to adequately manage the program and assess placement contractor performance. Having the right information is particularly important if Labor is to improve program performance as envisioned by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (the Results Act). Much of my testimony is drawn from a study being released today that we conducted at the request of the Chairman as well as from several other Job Corps reports we have issued over the past 2 years.[1]

For the report being released today, we met with Labor officials and reviewed Labor's eligibility policy guidance in relation to applicable legislation and regulations. We analyzed national data on the characteristics of program participants and early dropouts enrolled during program year 1996.[2] We also analyzed program retention data and placement results for each outreach and admissions and placement contractor during program years 1994 and 1995 to identify contractors that had higher and lower retention or placement performance. From among these, we selected 14 contractors to visit–2 that do only outreach and admissions, 1 that provides only placement services, and 11 that perform outreach and admissions functions as well as placement functions. We selected them in order to obtain detailed information on the processes the contractors use to admit applicants into Job Corps and place them upon their leaving the program.

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[1] Job Corps: Need for Better Enrollment Guidance and Improved Placement Measures (GAO/HEHS-98-1, Oct. 21, 1997).

[2] A program year begins on July 1 of a year and ends on June 30 of the following year. A program year is designated by the year in which it begins. Thus, program year 1995 began on July 1, 1995, and ended on June 30, 1996.

In summary, Job Corps needs to improve the selection of program applicants in order to decrease the early dropout rate for program participants. It needs to identify participants, from among its eligible population of about 6 million, who have the commitment, attitude, and motivation to complete the training and benefit from Job Corps' comprehensive and intensive services. We found that the procedures that the more successful outreach and admissions contractors use include commitment checks as well as preenrollment tours and briefings, which give applicants a more realistic basis for deciding whether to enroll in the program. We also found that Job Corps' policy guidance for 2 of the 11 eligibility criteria is ambiguous and incomplete, leading to an eligibility determination process that fails to follow the requirements of the legislation and program regulations.

Further, although Labor uses performance measures to make decisions about renewing placement contractors, we found that two of the four measures Labor uses do not provide information meaningful for assessing the performance of placement contractors. In addition, related measures regarding overall program performance are flawed, thus inaccurately assessing program performance. Although Job Corps reports that about 65 percent of its participants are placed in jobs and about 46 percent of these placements are related to the training participants receive, our work has raised questions about the accuracy and relevancy of both of these figures. These flawed measures jeopardize the ability of Job Corps, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) (which administers Job Corps), and Labor in general to determine whether the goals stated in Labor's strategic plan are being achieved.

BACKGROUND

Job Corps currently operates 109 centers throughout the United States, including centers in Alaska and Hawaii, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Most states have at least one center, and several states have four or more centers. Private corporations and nonprofit organizations, selected through competitive procurement, operate the majority of the centers. However, the departments of Agriculture and the Interior operate 28 centers, called civilian conservation centers, under interagency agreements.

To address the needs of students with multiple employment barriers, Job Corps provides a comprehensive range of services, primarily in a residential setting.[3] It provides services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including basic education, vocational skill training, social skill instruction, counseling, health care, room and board, and recreation. Job Corps also offers training in several vocational areas, such as business occupations, automotive repair, construction trades, and health occupations. Because of the comprehensive services Job Corps provides, it is a relatively expensive program. According to Labor's program year 1995 figures, the average cost per Job Corps student was more than $15,000.[4] In contrast, the cost per participant in the Job Training Partnership Act title II-C year-round program for youths is $1,673.[5] Cost varies according to how long Job Corps participants remain in the program–we estimated that, at the six centers included in a previous study, those who completed vocational training stayed an average of 13 months with an associated cost of about $26,200.[6]

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[3] In an earlier study, we compared the characteristics of Job Corps terminees with comparable youths in the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) youth training program

Considerable Job Corps' resources are spent on participants who drop out early and others who fail to complete their training. Although the length of time students stay in Job Corps can vary substantially–from 1 day up to 2 years–a large number of Job Corps participants leave within a short time after enrollment.[7] In program year 1995, about 15 percent of the enrollees left within 30 days of entering the program and more than one-fourth left within 60 days. Still others who stayed longer failed to complete their training. In total, 57 percent of program year 1995 terminees did not complete their vocational training. We estimated in our 1995 report that about 40 percent of program funds at the six centers we visited was spent on participants who did not complete vocational training.

Outreach and admissions services and placement services are provided by private contractors, the centers, or state employment service agencies under contract. During

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and found that a greater proportion of Job Corps youths (about 68 percent) than JTPA youths (39 percent) had multiple barriers to employment. See Job Corps: High Costs and Mixed Results Raise Questions About Program's Effectiveness (GAO/HEHS-95-180, June 30, 1995).

[4] On average, students spend about 7 months in the program.

[5] The average length of stay for JTPA title II-C is about 10 months. However, JTPA does not provide the comprehensive array of services provided by Job Corps nor is it a residential program.

[6] Job Corps: High Costs and Mixed Results Raise Questions About Program's Effectiveness (GAO/HEHS-95-180, June 30, 1995).

[7] Job Corps participants may be enrolled in the program for up to 2 years and may enroll for an additional year to attend advanced career training.

program year 1995, Job Corps spent about $60 million on outreach and admissions and placement contracts.[8]

Job Corps is a performance-driven program and outreach and admissions contractors and placement contractors must meet certain levels of achievement in order to continue to participate and to receive program funding. Two performance standards have been established for outreach and admissions contractors for the enrollment of certain numbers of male and female youths and for the proportion of enrollees who remain in the program for more than 30 days. A third standard relates to the percentage of participants who are eventually placed in jobs, the military, schools, or other training programs following program termination. Similarly, placement contractors are required to meet standards related to the percentage of participants placed. Additional placement contractor standards are applied to participants who are placed in jobs, such as the percentage of participants obtaining full-time jobs, jobs directly related to the vocational training they receive, and the average wage they receive at placement.

Individuals enroll in Job Corps by submitting applications through outreach and admissions contractors. Enrollment in the program is open entry and its training courses are self-paced, allowing students to enroll throughout the year and to progress at their own pace. Students leave Job Corps for a variety of reasons, including successful completion of the program objectives, voluntary resignation, disciplinary termination, and being absent without leave (AWOL) for 10 consecutive training days. With a few exceptions, participants terminating from Job Corps are assigned to a placement contractor for assistance in finding a job or enrolling in other education or training programs. Placement contractors are to give priority to finding full-time, training-related jobs for participants.

Participation in Job Corps can lead to placement in a job or enrollment in further training or education. It can also lead to educational achievements such as attaining a high school diploma and gains in reading or mathematics skills. According to Labor data, 75 percent of the more than 60,000 program terminees in program year 1995 were placed–65 percent in jobs and 10 percent in education or other training–and 46 percent of the placements were in training-related jobs. The average wage for all placements was $5.98; for training-related placements, $6.44.

Labor has long recognized that participants who complete their vocational training courses tend to do better after program termination–that is, they have significantly higher placement rates. Information we developed during our 1995 study of Job Corps verified this conclusion. We found that students who completed vocational training at the six centers we visited were 50-percent more likely to obtain a job than students who did not complete it (76 percent versus 49 percent, respectively). Furthermore, those who completed such training were five times more likely to obtain a training-related job at wages 25-percent higher than students who did not complete their training.[9] In contrast, about two-thirds of the jobs obtained by students who did not complete their training were in low-skill positions such as fast-food worker, cashier, laborer, assembler, and janitor.

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[8] About $8 million of this amount was for media support contracts. According to Labor, this high level of media expenditure should be regarded as a one-time but necessary cost to counteract a decline in Job Corps enrollments in program year 1994 and early program year 1995.

BETTER ELIGIBILITY GUIDANCE AND SCREENING ARE NEEDED TO SELECT PARTICIPANTS

The eligibility guidance that Labor provides to its outreach and admissions contractors and the screening procedures these contractors follow need to be improved. Labor has not provided adequate guidance on 2 of the 11 eligibility criteria–living in an environment characterized by disorienting conditions and having the capability and aspiration to complete and secure the full benefits of Job Corps. Without complete and unambiguous guidance, outreach and admissions contractors may not be enrolling the applicants who are the most appropriate for the program and, thus, may potentially be contributing to the dropout rate. We found that contractors with lower dropout rates follow procedures aimed at identifying applicants with the commitment and motivation to remain in and benefit from the program. However, others not following such procedures have higher dropout rates.

Guidance for Two Eligibility Criteria Is Inadequate

Job Corps' policy guidance for 2 of the 11 eligibility criteria is ambiguous and incomplete, which has led to an eligibility determination process that fails to follow the requirements of the legislation and regulations. One of these requirements is that, to be eligible for Job Corps, program participants must be from an environment so characterized by cultural deprivation, disruptive homelife, or other disorienting conditions as to impair their ability to successfully participate in other education and training programs. However, regarding this environmental requirement, Job Corps' Policy and Requirements Handbook (1) does not define key terms used to describe "other disorienting conditions," such as "limited job opportunities," and (2) limits eligibility to a set of factors that does not include "cultural deprivation," an environmental factor specified in the law. Further, Labor has not provided adequate guidance regarding another eligibility requirement–that participants have the capability and aspiration to complete and secure the full benefits of Job Corps. Without complete and unambiguous guidance, outreach and admissions contractors may not be enrolling the most appropriate applicants for the program under the law.

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[9] Because of the wide latitude Labor guidance permits for determining whether jobs participants obtained were training-related, we analyzed each of the more than 400 placements at the six centers and, using information contained in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, compared the job with the vocational training provided to determine whether the job was related to the training received. This resulted in a stricter interpretation of a job-training match for both those who completed and those who did not complete vocational training.

Contractors With Lower Dropout Rates Have Better Screening Procedures

In our most recent study, we found that placement contractors with lower dropout rates differ discernibly in outreach and assessment approaches and practices when compared with contractors having higher dropout rates.[10] We noted that admissions contractors with lower dropout rates–10 percent or less–tend to have better procedures for identifying applicants with the commitment and motivation to remain in and benefit from the program. These contractors emphasize making sure that applicants have the capability and aspiration to complete and secure the full benefit of the program, which is one of the program's statutory eligibility criteria. These more-successful contractors' procedures include "commitment checks" and preenrollment tours and briefings that give applicants a more realistic basis for deciding whether they want to enroll. This emphasis by these contractors is consistent with the finding we reported in a May 1996 report on successful training programs–namely, that a key job-training strategy shared by successful programs is a focus on ensuring that participants are committed to their training and to getting a job.[11]

The "commitment checks" that contractors use to test Job Corps applicants' initiative take a variety of forms. For example, several admissions counselors require individuals interested in Job Corps to set up application appointments. Four admissions counselors also mentioned that they require applicants to arrive for their meetings dressed in proper attire; otherwise, they have to schedule another appointment. In addition, three admissions counselors require applicants to submit written statements explaining why they want to participate in the program and what they hope to accomplish. Several admissions counselors require applicants to call weekly between the date of application and the enrollment date to determine the status of their application and to demonstrate their continued interest. Finally, one contractor uses a nine-point checklist of documents that all interested persons have to acquire before they set up their application appointment.

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[10] Job Corps: Need for Better Enrollment Guidance and Improved Placement Measures (GAO/HEHS-98-1, Oct. 21, 1997).

[11] Employment Training: Successful Projects Share Common Strategy (GAO/HEHS-96-108, May 7, 1996).

Some outreach and admissions contractors consider preenrollment tours of Job Corps centers and briefings to be extremely useful, although they are not practical in every situation. They provide applicants with a firsthand opportunity to obtain a thorough understanding of Job Corps' rules and requirements, observe the living conditions, erase false expectations, and determine whether they are suited for the regimented life of Job Corps. Some preenrollment briefings occur before application; others take place afterward. For example, one contractor requires all interested individuals to participate in a prearranged tour, briefing, and question-and-answer session, after which those still interested must set up an appointment to complete an application. Another contractor requires potential enrollees to take a tour after the application process. After the tour, applicants attend a briefing and a question-and-answer session, followed by one-on-one interviews with center staff. The value of preenrollment tours and briefings was also confirmed at two of the centers we visited by Job Corps participants who thought the tours and briefings were definitely worthwhile and by two regional directors who said that preenrollment tours and briefings are very effective in preparing applicants for Job Corps and in improving the prospect of retention.

Several regional directors commented on the importance of identifying applicants who are ready for Job Corps and can benefit from its training. For example, one regional director stated that because the program cannot afford to squander its resources on applicants who do not really want to be in the program, admissions counselors should ensure that applicants are ready and can benefit from the investment. Another regional director noted that because so many people are eligible (more than 6 million), it was important to provide the opportunity of Job Corps to those most likely to benefit and that commitment should be "first and foremost" when assessing applicants.

To identify other factors that might be related to program retention, we analyzed the relationship between participant characteristics and the likelihood of remaining in the program for at least 60 days. We found that the participants who are more likely to leave the program within the first 60 days included those who are younger (15 to 17 years old), have less than 12 years of education, have a dependent child, or reside more than 50 miles from the assigned center. The most clear-cut use of this information on participant characteristics may be for designing efforts to improve the retention of participants whose characteristics are associated with leaving the program early.

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IMPROVED MEASURES ARE NEEDED TO EVALUATE PLACEMENT CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE

While Job Corps is a performance-driven program, and Labor uses performance measures in evaluating program performance and in making contract renewal decisions, we found that Labor does not have the information it needs to accurately assess either the program or placement contractor performance. Two of the four measures Labor uses in assessing placement contractor performance are not meaningful. One of the measures –placement in jobs–holds contractors accountable for placing participants who are realistically unemployable and, therefore, could lead to an understatement of actual placement performance. At the same time, this measure could overstate placement performance because, as our previous work has shown, many reported placements cannot be confirmed. A second measure–placement in training-related occupations–probably overstates performance for two reasons. First, it includes participants who received little vocational training. Second, it gives placement contractors too much latitude in deciding whether placements are training-related. Problems in these measures also result in flawed assessments of overall program performance. Thus, we are uncertain about how well the program is performing.

Job Placement Measures Are Flawed and Many Reported Placements Are Unverifiable

The job placement measure Labor uses for assessing contractor performance has flaws that could lead to both understatement and overstatement of actual performance. Labor's current methodology for calculating a placement contractor's performance may have resulted in an understatement of the placement rate at the contractors we visited by an average of 8 percentage points. Labor's calculation includes participants who remained in the program for as little as 1 day, those who were AWOL, and those who were expelled after 30 days for using drugs or committing violent acts–all individuals a placement contractor would have difficulty recommending for employment. During program year 1995, about one-third of the participants leaving Job Corps were in these categories. We recognize that determining what happens to every program participant is an important indicator of how well Job Corps is performing but not necessarily an appropriate measure of placement contractor performance. If Labor's methodology were modified to include only participants who were in the program long enough to obtain at least minimal benefits (that is, stayed for at least 30 days) and were employable (that is, were not terminated for drug and violence violations and were not AWOL), the average placement rate for the 12 placement contractors we visited would have been from 2.6 percentage points to 13.6 percentage points higher.

Job placement data may also be overstated. Although Labor reports that 65 percent of Job Corps participants leaving the program are placed in jobs, our work has raised questions about the validity of this figure. In our June 1995 report, we questioned the validity of about 15 percent of the reported placements at six locations that we visited. We attempted to contact the employers of more than 400 randomly selected placements and found that, in more than 7 percent of the cases, employers reported either that they had never hired the participant or that the individual had never shown up for work, and we were unable to locate the employer of record for about 8 percent of the placements.

Although Job Corps has procedures for verifying contractors' placements, Labor may need to take steps to ensure that it fully implements such procedures and that it provides adequate oversight. In a recent report, Labor's Inspector General pointed out that Job Corps had not adequately managed or controlled the resolution of questionable placements identified in a sample of Job Corps terminees by the Job Corps' placement verification contractor.[12] Discrepancies in data reported by placement contractors are referred to appropriate Job Corps regional offices for review. The Inspector General's report found a backlog of questionable placements stemming from Job Corps' not adequately monitoring the resolution of such placements. In addition, the report said that the verification process had limited benefit because Job Corps did not take timely corrective actions.

In a memorandum to Job Corps regional directors, the Director of the Office of Job Corps pointed out that program guidance on what constitutes a valid placement is clear. In addition, placement contractors are required to verify and document 100 percent of their placements. She stated further that "if this is being done, there is really no excuse for a reported placement to be found invalid at a later date." The Director pointed out that the federal responsibility in this area is oversight. We agree and strongly encourage that oversight be adequate to ensure that placement data are accurately reported.

Training-Related Placement Measure Is Flawed

The value of the current job-training match data is questionable. The job-training match measure is used to evaluate the effectiveness of vocational training programs and placement contractors by determining the percentage of jobs participants obtain that match the training they receive while in Job Corps. Labor allows placement contractors wide discretion in deciding whether a job placement they obtain for a participant is related to the training he or she receives. At the same time, Labor requires that participants who receive little vocational training be included in the calculation of this measure. Labor is developing a new system to determine job-training matches that, it believes, will be more accurate.

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[12] Office of Inspector General, Job Corps Needs to Improve Its Followup on Questionable Placements (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Sept. 22, 1997).

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Placement contractors are responsible for recording whether or not participants are placed in jobs requiring skills similar to those included in their training. Labor's guidance for such decisions consists of 16 broad categories of training programs, and within each category are a number of detailed occupations in which Job Corps participants could have received training. In addition, each of the 16 broad categories contains a list of jobs that would be considered a match with the training a participant receives. To illustrate, the broad training category of construction trades includes 47 detailed training occupations and 357 placement occupations. An individual who was trained in any one of the 47 training occupations and was then placed into any one of the 357 placement occupations would be counted as a job-training match. For example, an individual trained as a carpenter (1 of the 47 training occupations) who was placed as a plumber, janitor, or cable television installer (3 of the 357 placement occupations) would be considered to have obtained a training-related placement.

Among the wide range of jobs that are considered to be training matches under each of the broad training categories, Labor's guidance includes jobs that appear to bear little, if any, relationship to Job Corps training. For example, a position as a key cutter would be considered a training match for any of the 51 training categories under the broad category of mechanics and repairers, which includes automobile mechanic, electronics assembler, and parts clerk. A position as a general laborer would be considered a job-training match for any of the 30 training occupations under the precision production category, which includes mechanical drafter, sheet metal worker, and welder. Table 1 lists examples of some possible matches under Labor's guidance.

Table 1: Some Occupations Considered Job-Training Matches for Selected Vocational Training Programs

Instructional category	Occupation
Automobile mechanic	Band attacher (attaches wrist bands to watches) Feeder (stacks paper in offset presses) Key cutter Washer (clock parts)
Cook	Bar attendant Carhop Housecleaner (hotels) Fast-food worker
Cosmetologist	Hot-room attendant (gives patrons towels) Sales person for weed eradication services Shaver (brushes suede garments after they have been cleaned) Shaver (shaves hog carcasses)
Heavy-equipment operator	Baggage checker Freight elevator operator Porter Ticket seller
Medical secretary	Coin counter and wrapper General cashier Hand packager Linen-room attendant
Welder	Antisqueak filler (shoes) Casket liner General laborer Hacker (lifts bricks of clay tiles from conveyor belt and stacks them)

Many of the positions that are considered to be related to Job Corps training require relatively little training to perform. The job placement occupational categories contained in Labor's guidance for job-training match come from its Dictionary of Occupational Titles. The dictionary includes, for each occupation, the average time required to learn the techniques, acquire information, and develop a facility for average performance in a specific job situation. For more than 700 of the jobs in Labor's guidance, the average training time is indicated as requiring either only a short demonstration or training up to and including 1 month. Thus, Labor is allowing job-

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training match credit for occupations such as fast-food worker, cashier, and laborer that require relatively short training time, even though participants spend, on average, about 7 months in the program. While we recognize that some of these positions provide entry into an occupational area that may lead to a better job, it is questionable in our view to consider such positions to be a job-training match until a participant advances into a job commensurate with the training he or she has received.

Further, Labor guidance encourages placement contractors to search among the allowable jobs for a job-training match. Its policy handbook states that, if a job-training match is not generated when a job-placement code is entered in its automated system, the placement contractor is allowed to enter a different code that may generate a job-training match, "so long as integrity of data is maintained." We found that the placement contractors' practice of recording job-training matches does indeed raise questions about the integrity of the data. One contractor told us that if a placement specialist obtains a job for a participant that is not a job-training match under Labor's guidance, then the manager and placement specialist meet to determine how to make it a match. This same contractor claimed that it is possible to get a job-training match for participants who were trained as bank tellers, secretaries, and welders and were subsequently placed in fast-food restaurants. For the most part, the placement contractors we visited similarly indicated that they use creativity when entering the code for the placement job in order to obtain a job-training match and raised concerns about the validity of reported job-training match statistics.

The job-training match performance measure may also unfairly hold placement contractors accountable for placing certain participants in training-related jobs. All individuals placed in a job or the military are included in the calculation of job-training match, regardless of how long they received vocational training. Thus, individuals who were in the program for a few days or weeks and had little chance to participate in vocational skill-training would be included in the calculation of the job-training match measure. Most of the placement contractors and regional staff we spoke with agreed that it would be more meaningful to include only participants who entirely or substantially completed their vocational skills training when this measure was calculated.

According to Labor officials, they are revising the methodology for determining job-training matches, which is currently based on the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. The proposed methodology will use a system that the Bureau of Labor Statistics uses to collect occupational employment data by various industry classifications, with about 830 five-digit codes rather than the 5,700 nine-digit codes taken from the dictionary. According to Labor, the proposed system will be more accurate and easier to maintain and monitor in terms of egregious job-training matches. Labor hopes to have the new methodology in place by July 1, 1998. In addition, Labor stated that the job-training match issue is primary on the agenda of a committee established by Job Corps to improve the quality of vocational outcomes.

JOB CORPS MEASURES UNDER THE RESULTS ACT COULD BE IMPROVED

Labor's strategic plan with regard to Job Corps would be more useful if the measures for the two performance goals it articulated were based on valid information and included existing performance indicators. Further, relying on Job Corps' invalid placement performance data compromises one of the basic purposes of the Results Act–measuring the extent to which goals are achieved–and jeopardizes Labor's ability to effectively manage the program.

The Results Act requires virtually every executive agency to develop a strategic plan, covering a period of at least 5 years from the fiscal year in which it is submitted. The act is aimed at improving program performance. It requires that agencies, in consultation with the Congress and other stakeholders, clearly define their missions and articulate comprehensive mission statements that define their basic purpose. It also requires that they establish long-term strategic goals, as well as annual goals linked to them. Agencies must then measure their performance against the goals they have set and report publicly on how well they are doing. In addition to monitoring ongoing performance, agencies are expected to evaluate their programs and to use the results from these evaluations to improve the programs.

The strategic plan Labor submitted under the Results Act consists of a department-level strategic plan overview supplemented by strategic plans for 15 of its offices or units, including ETA. The ETA strategic plan includes six goals, one of which is to increase the number of youths, particularly at-risk youths, who successfully make the transition into the workforce resulting in self-sufficiency. Job Corps is one of several programs aimed at addressing this goal. In that regard, ETA's plan includes two performance goals for Job Corps: (1) increase the number of youths retaining jobs and increase their earnings and (2) enhance their employability and increase their educational attainment levels.

While ETA's strategic plan structure appropriately defines the role of Job Corps within its mission and strategic goal of increasing the participation of at-risk youths in the workforce, resulting in self-sufficiency, we have concerns about the validity of one of the measures articulated for one of its performance goals. As previously noted, our past work and that of Labor's Inspector General has questioned the validity of placement information. Thus, one of the basic measures with which Labor proposes to assess the performance of Job Corps under the Results Act does not provide accurate and meaningful information.

ETA's articulation of performance measures could be improved. As shown in table 2, its plan identifies proposed performance measures for one of its goals but not the other. The plan states that performance indicators for the goal of increasing job retention and earnings will eventually include postprogram job retention and postprogram earnings gains. Job Corps will be developing these indicators by collecting data over the next 2

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years to develop baseline measures. In the interim, its proposed measures for program years 1998 and 1999 include placement rates and placement wages. As we noted previously, we question the validity of these data. In addition, while wages provide some measure of program success, an additional indicator of program quality that would be useful is an improved measure of job-training match. ETA's strategic plan has no related performance indicators for the second goal–enhancing employability and increasing educational attainment. Nonetheless, Job Corps' current performance measurement system contains measures directly related to this goal, including measures of functional literacy, functional numeracy, the attainment of a general equivalency diploma, and completing vocational training. In our opinion, measures such as these would be useful as performance indicators for this second goal.

Table 2: Job Corps' Performance Goals and Measures

ETA strategic goal	Performance goal	Performance measures
Increase the number of America's youths, particularly at-risk youths, who make a successful transition into the labor force resulting in self-sufficiency	Increase the number of youths retaining jobs and increase earnings, resulting in greater self-sufficiency	Existing: – number of terminees entering employment or further education – at an average placement wage To be developed: – postprogram job retention – postprogram earnings gains
	Enhance employability and raise educational attainment of program terminees	No measure identified

Labor also needs accurate information to effectively manage Job Corps. This is particularly important given the program's complex structure, involving three independent functions–recruiting, training, and placement–that are often contracted for separately. Without accurate information on contractor performance, Labor does not have the data for making proper decisions on contractor renewal.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Job Corps is the nation's most expensive job-training program, with an average cost of more than $15,000 per participant. And, although there are reasons for this high cost, a considerable amount of this investment is being spent on participants who drop out early and who fail to complete their vocational training. It has been recognized that those who complete their vocational training do better–that is, they get higher-skill jobs at better wages. To ensure that Job Corps operates the most effectively and that benefits accrue to the greatest number of eligible youths, it is imperative that the program identify, from among its eligible population, the applicants who both need Job Corps' intensive services and have the commitment, attitude, and motivation to complete the training and benefit from the program. Furthermore, without meaningful and accurate program performance information, Labor's ability to effectively manage the program is jeopardized.

In the report we are releasing today, we make several recommendations to the Secretary of Labor to help ensure that Job Corps uses its resources to serve the most appropriate participants. We recommend that the Secretary provide clear and complete guidance on program eligibility criteria and provide better guidance to ensure that outreach and admissions contractors assess each applicant's capability and aspirations to complete training and obtain a positive outcome. We also recommend improvements in the measures Labor uses to assess placement contractor performance, to make them more meaningful as tools for improving the selection and retention of contractors.

In commenting on a draft of our report, Labor disagreed with our recommendation that it clarify and expand its program eligibility guidance in order to ensure that it is consistent with the law and gave no indication of any formal action it planned to take on this recommendation. Labor expressed concern with our characterization of program eligibility guidance as inadequate. It commented that guidance on one eligibility factor–limited job opportunity–was provided to all admissions counselors during training conducted in program year 1995. Labor also stated that another eligibility factor–cultural deprivation–was not included in its policy handbook because other specific factors were more useful. We disagree that sufficient policy guidance was provided on both factors. Providing guidance on the term "limited job opportunity" during a training program was not adequate because, even if all admissions counselors at that time attended this training, contractors and staff have since turned over. And, as mentioned in our report, the admissions counselors we interviewed interpreted this term in different ways, as they did "cultural deprivation," thus indicating that contractors need clearer guidance for interpreting these terms consistently. In addition, Labor fails to explain how its guidance on either term satisfies other specific provisions contained in the legislation and program regulations.

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Although Labor expressed some concern with our remaining recommendations, it acknowledged that they had merit and warranted consideration, and the agency identified actions that it would take.

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Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. We would be happy to answer any questions that you or Members of the Subcommittee may have.

(205357)

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Thank you, Ms. Blanchette. I should have mentioned that Ms. Blanchette and Dr. Nilsen are with the GAO. Then Ms. Dalton and Mr. Getek are with the Inspector General, Department of Labor. Ms. Dalton.

Ms. DALTON. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Towns. I am pleased to appear before you to discuss our audit work in the Job Corps program. The views I am expressing today are those of the Office of Inspector General and may not be the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Over the years, the OIG has conducted numerous audits of this program to provide management with information critical to its administration, and to provide Congress with relevant oversight information. These audits have focussed primarily on assessing the results of the program both, from the perspective of student outcomes, and the effectiveness of the program as a whole.

Through these audits we have identified, or pointed to, weaknesses in key aspects of the program, namely, the quality of training, contractor performance, center operations, the level and quality of placements and the level and effectiveness of followup services. We have also identified best practices for the program as a whole and made recommendations on needed improvements and corrective actions.

In many cases, management has agreed with us and taken necessary corrective actions. For example, we have furnished Job Corps with comprehensive cost analysis reports on the performance of the program in which we identified a number of issues affecting the overall performance of the program. These have included students finishing the program with no measurable gains, students not obtaining jobs in occupations for which they were trained, and the low performance of certain centers.

We also conducted an audit of the Job Corps student outcomes for a sample of 1,800 students. Some of our findings included our inability to determine whether or not 56 percent of the students were working following their participation in the program. Job Corps had invested $12.5 million in these students.

The audit also disclosed that while the occupations in demand were determined at the center level, the vocational curriculum for each center is determined at the National office.

In that audit we identified several ways to improve the benefits students derive from the program. Among our recommendations were: the need for measuring and documenting, on a continuing basis, the long-term outcomes of Job Corps students; refining vocational training to ensure that training provided is consistent with occupations that are in demand in the geographic areas in which the majority of students return; and addressing the needs of employers for skilled workers by ensuring Job Corps curricula adequately prepares students.

We also conducted a survey, in cooperation with Job Corps, to identify best practices currently used in high-performing centers. These practices included: establishing an outcome-oriented program of academic education, vocational and social skills training with clear, attainable goals, and establishing accountability over performance by identifying problems, taking prompt corrective action, tracking, monitoring and reporting performance, and ensuring staff have necessary and adequate training.

Mr. Chairman, the development of outcome-related goals and performance measures is of major importance in ensuring the success of this program. It is also what is needed for the program to meet the spirit of GPRA, which requires Federal programs, like Job Corps, to demonstrate their value.

In the case of Job Corps, it is our opinion that this would help its students to attain long-term employment resulting in self-sufficiency.

In response to our many audits, Job Corps has instituted policies or taken corrective actions to improve performance in many of these areas. Examples of these have been detailed in my full statement. However, due to resource limitations, we in the Inspector General's Office have not been able to audit the implementation or effectiveness of some of these changes.

With respect to placement services, as you may be aware, the Job Corps program relies on contractors to find jobs for students after they terminate their training. Job Corps placement efforts are supposed to focus on jobs related to students' vocational training, but they may also include enrollment in other educational or training programs, or enlistment in military service.

Despite the many improvements implemented by Job Corps over the years, we continue to identify problems related to placement services provided to students, after they terminate their training. Audits of specific training and placement services have consistently identified deficiencies in the level and quality of placements.

A recent example of our work in this area is our performance audit of the training programs operated by the National Plastering Industry's Joint Apprenticeship Trust Fund. An analysis of the post-program employment experience of former students disclosed that a sizable number of students are having difficulty keeping and/or obtaining employment. For example, we found that in our sample of 129 students placed, 98 had either been fired, had quit or were laid off.

The audit disclosed that only minimum post-placement followup services were provided to these former students. Given the significant amount of resources invested in Job Corps students, we recommended that additional post-placement followup services be provided to improve students' employment experience. To immediately deal with this issue, Job Corps established a placement followup work group and has requested our assistance in this endeavor.

We have also audited the Job Corps placement verification system. Our audit found that Job Corps had not adequately managed or controlled the process for resolving questionable placements identified by its verification contractors.

Based on our extensive oversight of this program we have recognized, and Job Corps has agreed, that the ultimate success of the program is the placement of students into long-term employment. Therefore, our most recent audit efforts have focussed on the placement function. Our overriding goal in devoting more attention to placement services is to help Job Corps ensure that students derive the maximum benefit from their training; that is, obtaining and maintaining quality jobs at wages that make them self-sufficient.

Mr. Chairman, the OIG looks forward to continuing to work with the Department and the Congress to ensure the success of the Job Corps program. This concludes my prepared statement and I would be pleased to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Dalton follows:]

STATEMENT OF PATRICIA A. DALTON
DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

October 23, 1997

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify in my capacity as Deputy Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Labor. I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss our audit work and recommendations concerning the Job Corps Program.

From the outset, I would like to emphasize that any views expressed today are those of the Office of Inspector General and may not be the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor.

BACKGROUND

The Job Corps Program was created in 1964 and is currently authorized under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The Department of Labor, through its Employment and Training Administration (ETA), administers the Job Corps Program, with annual appropriations of over $1 billion. The purpose of this program is to provide disadvantaged young men and women with education, vocational training, work experience, and counseling to help them become responsible, employable, and productive citizens. Job Corps is unique in that the program establishes residential and non-residential centers at which intensive educational and vocational training is provided.

Each year over 60,000 students are served at 111 Job Corps Centers around the country. Job Corps operates through a partnership between the Government, labor, and the private sector. The Government provides the facilities and equipment for Job Corps centers and the funding for recruitment of students, center operations, and placement of students upon termination. Major corporations and nonprofit organizations manage and operate 83 of the Job Corps centers under contractual agreements with the DOL. The Departments of Agriculture and Interior operate on public lands 28 of the Job Corps centers, which are called civilian conservation centers.

Center operators are responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of the Job Corps centers. Their functions in management and operation of centers include hiring and training of staff, procuring materials and supplies, providing basic educational and vocational skill training, providing student orientation and residential living supervision, managing center finances, maintaining center facilities and equipment, ensuring security and safety, and fostering community relations. In addition to the center-sponsored training programs, Job Corps also contracts with National Training Contractors (NTCs) to operate vocational training programs and provide placement services. NTCs are mainly national trade unions and affiliated organizations that provide hands-on training for over 12,000 students annually.

In its 33-year history, Job Corps has enjoyed a great deal of success. It has served as the critical turning point in the lives of thousands of young men and women. However, as is usually the case for programs of this magnitude, there is a need to provide continuous oversight and continue to identify what works, what does not work, and where improvements can be made. In addition, with enactment of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993, Congress and the Administration are explicitly mandating that programs such as Job Corps be effective, have a positive impact, and -- most importantly -- demonstrate a positive return on the taxpayers' investment.

OIG OVERSIGHT OF JOB CORPS PROGRAM

Over the years, the OIG has conducted numerous audits of this program to provide management with information critical to its administration and to provide Congress with relevant oversight information. These audits have focused primarily on assessing the results of the program -- both from the perspective of student outcomes and the effectiveness of the program as a whole. Through these audits we have identified or pointed to weaknesses in the key aspects of the program -- namely the quality of training, contractor performance, center operations, the level and quality of placements, and the level and effectiveness of follow-up services. While we have not assessed the effectiveness of recruitment contractors, which is of particular interest to this Subcommittee, the weaknesses we have identified -- particularly with respect to student outcomes -- may indicate that the individuals entering the program may not always receive the appropriate screening to ensure they have the aspirations and capabilities to succeed in the program, as required by law. We have also identified best practices for the program as a whole and made recommendations on needed improvements and corrective action. In many cases, management has agreed with us and taken necessary corrective action.

Mr. Chairman, our most pressing concern with respect to the Job Corps Program is to ensure that the significant investment of taxpayers' dollars results in students obtaining long-term employment at a wage that ensures their self-sufficiency. Today I will first discuss our work related to the program as a whole and then focus on the issue of placements, which we have identified as critical to the success of this program.

GENERAL PROGRAM FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Program Performance

As I mentioned, in our oversight of this program, we have worked to identify weaknesses, as well as best practices, which impact the overall success of the program. For example, we have furnished Job Corps with comprehensive cost analysis reports on the performance of the program. These reports, which were based on Job Corps' own data for each of its individual centers, provided ETA with an additional management tool to evaluate and maximize the program's effectiveness. As a result, these reports did not contain specific recommendations -- just information on the program's performance. Through these reports, we identified a number of issues affecting the overall performance of the program including: students finishing the program with no measured gains, students not obtaining jobs in occupations for which they were trained, and the low performance of certain centers.

Student Outcomes

We also conducted an audit of Job Corps student outcomes for a sample of 1,800 students who were placed, or whose period of placement assistance expired, during Program Year 1991. Some 2 years following their termination from Job Corps, the OIG could not determine the career status of 56% of the students in our sample. Consequently, the OIG was unable to determine whether or not these students were working following their participation in the program, for which Job Corps had invested approximately $12.5 million. We also found that 10% of the students were unemployed; 25% had obtained unmatched employment (i.e., employment not related to the training received), with an average hourly wage of $5.79; 7% had obtained matched employment (i.e., employment related to the training received), with an average hourly wage of $6.87; and 3% were either enrolled in school or in the military. The audit also disclosed that while the occupations in demand are determined at the center level, the vocational curriculum for each center is determined by the Job Corps National Office. Moreover, the geographic areas used to determine occupations in demand are defined primarily as the local community in which the center is located, despite the fact that many students return to their home for placement services following their job corps training.

As a result of this audit, Mr. Chairman, we identified several ways to improve the benefits students derive from the program. Among our recommendations were the need for:

- Job Corps to access wage data maintained by the states to track student's employment after leaving the program;

- Job Corps' performance measures to be augmented to measure and document, on a continuing basis, the long-term outcomes of Job Corps students;

- Vocational training to be refined to ensure that training provided is consistent with occupations that are in demand in the geographic areas to which the majority of students return;

- Addressing the needs of employers for skilled workers by ensuring that Job Corps curricula adequately prepare students; and

- Developing contacts with businesses to ensure that jobs are available for students upon completion of their training.

Best Practices of High Performing Centers

Moreover, to help Job Corps improve performance at low-ranked centers, the OIG conducted a survey, in cooperation with Job Corps, to identify best practices currently used at high performing centers. Best practices are those practices, processes and systems that have a positive effect on operating efficiency or performance. We surveyed outreach, admissions and placement contractors to identify their impact on successful center performance. The survey also addressed the oversight and support activities of corporate management, regional offices, Job Corps administrators of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior, and the Job Corps' national office.

At every level, from Job Corps' national office to the centers, the OIG found common threads that helped improve the students' opportunities for success. It is important to note that no single practice alone will ensure success. Across the board, we found that high performing centers had sound management practices that included:

- Establishing an outcome-oriented program of academic education, vocational and social skills training with clear, attainable goals;

- Encouraging an atmosphere of teamwork and effective communication between students, staff, and the local community; and

- Establishing accountability over performance by identifying problems; taking prompt corrective action; tracking, monitoring and reporting performance; and ensuring staff has necessary and adequate training.

Through this audit we also identified the need to establish a unique focus and different performance standards for 16 and 17-year old Job Corps students because younger students have different needs and are harder to serve than older students.

Establishing Goals and Measuring Performance Under GPRA

Mr. Chairman, the development of outcome-related goals and performance measures is of major importance in ensuring the success of this program. It is also what is needed for the program to meet the spirit of GPRA, which requires Federal programs like Job Corps to demonstrate their value. In the case of Job Corps, that would be for its students to attain long-term employment resulting in self-sufficiency. Therefore, the Department needs to clearly define the outcomes expected from Job Corps in terms of the number of students who will achieve self-sufficiency, what constitutes self-sufficiency, and over what period of time. After the goals and measures have been established, Job Corps must begin collecting the long-term outcomes information needed to measure program performance against their goals. To collect this information, Job Corps needs to have access to social security and unemployment insurance wage data, which the program currently does not have.

IMPROVEMENTS BY JOB CORPS

In response to these audits, Job Corps has instituted policies or taken corrective action over the last few years in efforts to improve performance in many of these areas. For example, Job Corps:

- Revised its performance management system to improve performance in certain key areas such as: increasing placements in training-related employment, decreasing the number of students that terminate from the program without any measured gains, and decreasing the number of students whose career or education status is unknown once they leave the program.

- Implemented a new code of conduct for Job Corps students that requires the termination of any student committing any act of violence or testing positive for drugs.

- Developed a technical assistance guide to assist center operators in identifying performance problems, provided special training to key management staff, and provided certain low-performing centers with intensive on-site technical assistance.

- Implemented a screening process to ensure that students entering the program possess the capabilities and aspirations necessary to secure the full benefits of the program.

- Increased job placement assistance to 6 months following termination from the program and the follow-up on student employment status to 13 weeks after placement.

- Moved to cost-reimbursement contracting, rather than fixed-unit priced contracting to control and monitor costs claimed by contractors more effectively.

However, due to resource limitations, we have not been able to audit the implementation or effectiveness of many of these changes. Nonetheless, on the surface, these are positive changes in the management of the program.

PLACEMENT SERVICES

With respect to placement services, as you may be aware, Mr. Chairman, the Job Corps Program relies on contractors to find jobs for students after they terminate their training. These contractors may be independent placement agencies, State Employment Security Agencies, or national training contractors providing services to various centers. Upon terminating from Job Corps, all students are instructed to report to the designated placement contractor in the area in which the student intends to live. Placement contractors are to make every effort to place students in jobs with promising prospects for long-term employment. According to JTPA, Job Corps placement efforts are supposed to focus on jobs related to a student's vocational training, but may also include enrollment in other educational or training programs or enlistment in military service.

Deficiencies in Placement Services

Despite the many improvements implemented by Job Corps over the years, we continue to identify problems related to placement services provided to students after they terminate their training. Audits of specific training and placement services have consistently identified deficiencies in the level and quality of placements of Job Corps students by placement contractors.

A recent example of our work in this area is our performance audit of the training programs operated by the National Plastering Industry's Joint Apprenticeship Trust Fund (Trust Fund). DOL contracts with the Trust Fund to provide vocational training in plastering and cement masonry as well as placement services at various Job Corps centers. The Trust Fund is one of nine Job Corps National Training Contractors (NTC) and receives approximately $4.7 million annually to provide training and placement services to about 1,200 Job Corps students. During Program Year 1995, the year for which we reviewed performance, the Trust Fund operated 47 vocational training programs at 30 Job Corps centers.

An analysis of the post-program employment experience of former students who were initially placed by the Trust Fund in training-related employment disclosed that a sizable number are having difficulty keeping and/or obtaining employment. The audit disclosed that only minimum post-placement follow-up services were provided to these former students.

The analysis, conducted an average of 14 months after the students were placed in training-related employment, was based on employer confirmation data as well as state unemployment insurance (UI) wage data. We received 129 responses to questionnaires mailed to employers regarding 259 randomly selected training-related job placements reported by the Trust Fund during Program Year 1995. The audit found that of the 129, 98 students were laid-off, had quit, or were fired (19, 55, and 24, respectively), and had an average length of employment of only 100 days. We found that only 12 of the former students were still employed with the initial employer. Another 11 told the initial employer that they were leaving to accept another job. The employers told us that 8 were never employed. After leaving the initial employer, the majority of these former students had very low wages, as reported in state UI wage records. The state UI wage data indicate that these former students were sporadically employed or not employed at all, and some had applied for unemployment compensation. The former students listed as sporadically employed had reported wages averaging $2,400 per year, after an average of 8 months of training in plastering or cement masonry, at a cost of about $17,000 per student.

Given the significant amount of resources invested in the students' Job Corps training, we recommended that additional post-placement follow-up services be provided to improve students' employment experience. This includes providing students with any needed placement services for up to 1 year after the completion of their training.

Despite concern with on our reliance on state UI wage data to determine the employment status of 27 former students, Job Corps agreed with the OIG that every effort must be made to improve student employability and labor market attachment. Through the years, greater productivity has been expected from NTCs (as compared to Job Corps center-operated training programs) primarily because NTCs have a network of union and industry affiliates that support the placement process. This should increase the likelihood NTC students will be placed in jobs that match their training, pay well, and last long enough for strong roots to be established in the labor force. To immediately deal with this issue, Job Corps established a placement follow-up workgroup and has requested our consultation assistance in that endeavor.

As a result of our concern in this area, we also audited the Job Corps placement verification system. Job Corps contracts for placement verification services to ensure the validity and accuracy of performance data related to placements. Our audit found that Job Corps has not adequately managed or controlled the process of resolving the questionable placement memoranda (QPMs) sent by the placement verification contractors to Job Corps regional offices. As a result of the backlog of the memoranda that accumulated in the regional offices, placement contractors were paid for invalid placements and former students were paid placement bonuses based on invalid placement data supplied by placement contractors. We recommended that Job Corps ensure that: the backlog of QPMs is resolved; the funds inappropriately paid to contractors and former students be recovered; placement statistics be adjusted as needed; and adequate controls over the Job Corps placement verification system be in place.

Current OIG Focus

Mr. Chairman, based on our extensive oversight of this program, we have recognized, and Job Corps has agreed, that the ultimate success of the Job Corps Program is the placement of students into long-term employment, in which they can earn a livable wage, and from which they can achieve self-sufficiency. In addition to providing appropriate screening and providing a quality training program, key to achieving this is the effectiveness of placement services. Therefore, we are currently shifting resources to devote more attention to the placement function. Specifically, we have begun a cooperative effort with Job Corps to identify improvements in this function to maximize the students' Job Corps experience and translate that into a meaningful job. This joint audit will assess placement services being provided by contractors to Job Corps students and identify affordable placement practices which, if implemented, would provide reasonable assurance that each student would receive assistance resulting in a quality placement.

We will be evaluating the adequacy of placement services provided to students terminating from Job Corps under varying circumstances (i.e., completer, non-completer, in need of support services, age, etc.) This will include determining the level of intervention on the part of the placement contractor to assist students in finding quality employment. We will also determine if placement practices result in quality placements (i.e., job match, high wages, full-time employment). Finally, we will assess whether monitoring practices by Job Corps regions are effective in evaluating the quality of a contractor's performance and in ensuring that corrective action on any identified deficiencies is implemented.

Our overriding goal in devoting more attention to placement services is to help Job Corps ensure that students derive the maximum benefit from their training -- that is, obtaining and maintaining quality jobs at wages that makes them self-sufficient.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, the OIG looks forward to continuing to work with the Department and the Congress to ensure the success of the Job Corps Program. This concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or the other Members of the Subcommittee may have.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Thank you.

To start questioning, we will turn to Mr. Towns.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me begin; there seems to be a disagreement with GAO about whether every participant should be counted or whether only those who complete training should be counted. There seems to be a disagreement between the two of you on that. Am I correct?

Ms. DALTON. That is correct, Mr. Towns. We believe that in order to evaluate the Job Corps program as a whole, you need to look at what happens to every student that comes into the program. And that will provide information to see what is working, what is not working and what needs to be corrected. And even though a student has dropped out of a program, we still have an obligation to provide them some type of assistance.

Mr. TOWNS. Right.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Well, there is a difference between outcome measures, or there is a possibility of a difference between outcome measures that would evaluate the program as a whole and outcome measures that one would use to assess placement, outreach and admissions contractors. And our statement with regard to the participants to be included in calculating the measure had to do with assessing the contractors.

We do not take issue with the need to look at what happens to every participant that enters the program when you are assessing the program as a whole.

Mr. NILSEN. In fact, we agree that you have to look at, if you are looking at the performance of the program as a whole, you have to look at what happens to everybody coming in the program. Where we disagree, as Ms. Blanchette said, is when you are looking at, say, placement contractors. You do not necessarily, if you are looking at their performance, we have made recommendations that you do not necessarily hold them accountable for everyone coming in the program.

There are certain people that we suggest should be included, such as those who go AWOL or are kicked out of the program for drugs or violence or drop out of the program in a very short period of time because the program really has not benefited them and they are not the people you want to be focussing your efforts on in placement.

Mr. TOWNS. You know, I am having a problem with all of this. Let me tell you why. It is because I think that when a person has been exposed to the program, and even though it might be a short period of time, sometimes some positive things take place at that point which could move a person in another direction.

Of course, I know these kinds of things are pretty hard to measure but I think that when I look at what is happening overall, in many States, in the State I come from, to house and incarcerate somebody is about $57,000 per annum. When you start looking at that kind of cost versus what we are talking about here, maybe we need to set up some other ways to further evaluate; I do not know.

Anyway, let me just go to some of your testimony here. You mentioned that many Job Corps students obtain jobs that they could have obtained without any training. And I have some problems with this because the first job of many college graduates has no relation to their major. This does not make a college education a waste of time or a waste of money.

Since there is no long-term followup for Job Corps graduates, do we know whether these graduates ultimately find jobs that are related to the training that they received or not?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Well, as you stated, there is currently no real followup as to what happens beyond the immediate first placement. And, of course, that is something that needs to be determined.

With regard to our statement out the relatively little amount of training required for some of the jobs that Job Corps participants are placed in once they leave the program, we are comparing the average 10-month stay in the Job Corps program with getting a job where the estimated training could be 1 month or less.

We were not making any evaluative comments about the nature of the job beyond that. We just found that in terms of the match that counts in terms of a placement in a matched job, it seemed that not only were some of the relationships between the training and the jobs not obvious, but that the amount of training required for the job seemed to be a lot less than what would be required for—a lot less than the stay in the job Corps program.

But you are right. Ultimately, the test is what happens to those participants several years later.

Mr. TOWNS. Right. I think that is key.

You note that 2 of the 11 factors used to determine eligibility in Job Corps should be defined more objectively. What recommendations do you have for measuring the students' motivation to complete the program? How do you measure that?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Well, as we stated in our full testimony statement and in the report that is being released today, we did look at some promising practices of contractors that have higher retention rates among the participants they bring into the program. And what we found those contractors were doing was No. 1, giving the applicants information about the program and what life would be like in the program, to help the applicants decide whether or not that was what they wanted.

Also, there were certain things the applicants were required to do to show their commitment. They had to show up on time for appointments. They had to dress a certain way. They had to provide certain documents perhaps. They were required to do something, to have some investment in their own training in order to show their level of commitment, and we believe that these are certainly promising practices.

That is not to say there aren't other things out there that could be done but the common thread here seems to be providing information to prospective participants so that they themselves can have some role in deciding whether or not they want to go into the program and having prospective participants show something up front as to their level of commitment in this endeavor.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me say what my problem is here. A person comes into the program and all of a sudden they wake up and say, "Wait a minute; I want to do something else in my life. I want to do something with my life," and they leave and go get a job and start working, providing leadership and supporting a family, doing whatever else that we all do to consider ourselves successful. And, of course, this is not really measured in any way but those few days or few weeks or few months that they were involved in the program, some positive things could happen and nowhere along the line is anybody measuring this. This really bothers me. Go ahead.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. The issue, I believe, there has been an estimate of about 6 million people eligible for Job Corps and Job Corps actually has participants of about 1 percent of that amount. And it is an expensive program. There are various estimates of how much it costs and really how much it costs depends on how long a participant stays in the program but, on average, over $15,000 per participant.

To the extent that participants could have gotten training elsewhere that would have satisfied their needs, that would have been less costly, or to the extent that there were other potential participants that did not get into the program because this person got a slot and left after a few weeks or months, the program is not being as effective as it could be. That is the issue.

It is not an issue of whether someone shows up for one day, that that person might not get some value from having been there that one day. That is not something we can determine and it is certainly something that is possible. But in terms of a program that has such a great population in need of its services, we would like to see the participants most capable and willing to take advantage of those services actually get in the program and have that opportunity.

Mr. NILSEN. I would like to add one other thing. When we looked at what happens to those who stay in the program and complete their training versus those who do not, as I think you noted in your opening remarks, those who stay in the program are more likely to get a job, more likely to get a job related to the training and get a job at a higher wage.

Those who drop out and do not complete the training, on average, two-thirds of them get a low-skill job. So there are major differences. And while you are right, that people could wake up and change their orientation after a short period of time, as Ms. Blanchette says, it is a matter of is this the most effective use of Federal dollars?

Mr. TOWNS. Remember, I stated that it costs more to put a person in prison. Don't lose sight of that number, as well. Let me ask this, Mr. Chairman, and then I will close.

You stated the Department of Labor does not have appropriate data for determining contractor renewals. Can you tell us what kind of data should be collected to make that determination?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. That was in relation to our assessment of the placement measure that is one of the criteria, placement rate and placement in jobs that match the skills training. Those are two dimensions or two measures that are used to assess contractors and we found both of them to be flawed.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Will there be a second round?

Mr. SNOWBARGER. I think we will have time for a second round, yes.

Let me ask a few questions real quickly and then Mr. Barrett will inquire. This really isn't the specific topic of your testimony but just to give me a little background, can you describe the average participant? I know there is not an average participant but I mean who gets into the Job Corps programs? Are these people out for a first-time job? Are they people who have been in the job market and have dropped out for some reason or other and are now trying to get back in? Both?

Ms. DALTON. Mr. Chairman, it could be both. Youth from the age of 16 to 24 are eligible for the program. They have come from severely disadvantaged backgrounds and they are assessed as to whether or not a residential program would be of maximum benefit to them. Oftentimes, they come from a very disruptive family environment.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. I am very concerned, Ms. Blanchette, about the matching here of the job training with the jobs that they actually get. I am looking at the chart on page 11 in your testimony as just an example of the various job training programs versus the jobs that they actually received afterwards. It seems pretty clear to me that the jobs they received afterwards not only seem very unrelated to skills that might have been taught, but seem to be entry level positions where not much training would have been involved anyway.

I am looking at, for instance, cosmetologist handing out towels in a hot room, being a hot room attendant. I don't think it takes a whole lot of training to hand out a towel, but I may be wrong.

And I guess what concerns me in an overall sense is to what extent do these programs attempt to train people in programs where there are jobs actually available? The other statistic, and I can't remember which one of you used this, the 98 out of 129 that were employed for 100 days or less, even in that specifically highly-trained area. Are we matching the job training to what is actually available in the area and likely to have jobs available?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. As Ms. Dalton stated in her opening remarks, the curriculum is determined at a National level and not——

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Why?

Mr. NILSEN. It is a federally administered program.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. I understand that. Sometimes we have had the wisdom to defer to State and local levels to make some decisions, apparently not here.

Mr. NILSEN. I think it is an appropriate question for the program director.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. OK.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. But because of the National curriculum, there is certainly no guarantee that that curriculum will tie in with the local job market.

Also, as we reported in one of our recent reports on Job Corps, about 40 percent of the participants actually go out of State to attend the Job Corps center. They don't get trained in the States in which they reside, but a high percentage, 80 some, I believe, once they complete their training, go back to their home State. So this is also an issue.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. When a student comes into the program, and you are right—I am probably asking the wrong panel these questions and I will try to remember to ask the right panel the questions—but even this out-of-State situation, how does a person get placed in a particular job category? Is it, "What do you have an interest in?" You know, "I would like to drive a Caterpillar" or something and so they let him drive a Caterpillar, even though there aren't any jobs Nationwide for that kind of thing?

Mr. NILSEN. You mean how does an individual participant get put in a particular area of job training?

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Right.

Mr. NILSEN. I believe that is done both at the regional level by the recruiter, because people are sent to centers that have particular kinds of training. Many centers have similar kinds of training but certain areas are only handled in specific centers. But also that would probably be addressed at the center level, as well.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Let me change directions here a little bit. Earlier this year we had a hearing, and I believe representatives from both of your offices were here at that point in time, and you may have been the ones who were here and I apologize if you were, but we talked about what kinds of job skills actually needed to be taught. Outside of what does it take to be a cook or what it takes to be a truck driver, there are certain skills that it takes to be an employee and I believe there was some criticism, and I think it was by GAO at that point in time, that there wasn't enough attention being paid to just teaching what it means to be an employee.

Did you find in your study any relationship between the good centers and the ones that weren't producing as well in those areas?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. We really did not focus on the content of the training that went on within the centers for this effort. We focussed on the outreach and admissions contractors and the placement contractors.

Ms. DALTON. Several years ago we looked at the best practices at the centers and found a number of things that would deal with that. Some of the best practices that we identified for the good centers, included developing a philosophy that focuses everything toward student needs. Not just the vocational and educational training, but general work skills—getting up in the morning, being to work on time, and being dressed properly. Those are some of the things that Job Corps does work on, and in the better centers it is stressed, based on the individual student needs. And they have implemented very aggressive evaluation and incentive systems which encompass all of these factors.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Mr. Barrett, do you want to go now? We will have an opportunity for a second round, so don't feel rushed.

Mr. BARRETT. Very briefly, more of a comment than a question because I represent a district in Wisconsin that has the highest percentage of unemployed people in the State, the highest percentage of minorities in the State of Wisconsin, so you would think it would be a natural for me to be a big fan of this program.

I must say, though, when I saw what the hearing was on, it brought back, frankly, the most bitter memories that I have had since I have been in Congress. In my first term, when the discussion was about placing new Job Corps centers, the area I represent rated at the top of the list for placement—we do not have one in my area—and the decision was ultimately made to expand Job Corps centers. I don't think it was done on a needs basis. I think it was done on a wholly political basis.

So I think that takes away a lot of the credibility of this program, to me. If these placements are going to be made politically rather than where the need is, I look at it with a very jaundiced eye, and this is a program that I would love to love. Having a very, very high percentage of my constituents who are in need of the program, I find it disgraceful and an embarrassment that this program has not come to one of the major metropolitan areas in this country. Again, I think it is exclusively on political reasons.

That is all I have to say. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Mr. Kucinich.

Mr. KUCINICH. I think I will wait until we come back.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. We have about 5 minutes.

Mr. TOWNS. I will take it.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Mr. Towns.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me sort of open up by saying I think my problem is that many of these youngsters, as I envision it, are coming from homes where no one probably has worked—getting up in the morning, dressing to go out to work and to do all those kinds of things. It is a new experience. And once they do it, and maybe they might even encounter something negative, but I support the theory that we learn from our vicarious experiences, be them either positive or negative, and that if a person is terminated because of—I still think there is a possibility that there is a learning process that has taken place which, to me, is important with the type of person that we are dealing with. And I think that we should never, never lose sight of that.

What measures do you believe should be taken to assure that placement contractors have actually placed someone in a job?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Well, part of the current system is that there is an oversight mechanism for reviewing the results that placement contractors report and that needs to be, I guess, taken a little more seriously. It is certainly to the advantage of a contractor to show a high placement rate and it is the placement contractor that is recording the placement and the nature of the job and indicating a job match. There certainly has to be some type of monitoring, on a sampling basis or some basis, to make sure that placement contractors are reporting accurate results.

Mr. TOWNS. I debated this with myself here. I was not going to ask this question, but I have to.

You mentioned that two of the eligibility factors—living in a disoriented environment and motivation to complete the program—are pretty subjective. Should we spend time trying to define these subjective factors or should we just eliminate them from the eligibility criteria? I tried not to ask this, but I just couldn't leave without doing it.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. I don't believe you could eliminate them or something comparable to them from eligibility criteria because they do get at the heart of what makes eligibility for this program different perhaps from some others.

The living under disorienting conditions is one of the features of the environmental factor and that is one of the things that makes the individual severely disadvantaged, which is the reason that the

Federal Government is willing to spend this amount of money on helping the individual.

The problem there is with defining one of the qualifying factors, and that is limited employment opportunity. And the reason that particular factor is so important is that most of the outreach and admissions contractors that check off the environmental criterion use that as the reason, but there doesn't seem to be much consensus as to what it means.

Some contractors believe that it has to do with characteristics inherent in the person. The person has limited opportunities because of lack of education, lack of skill, not being able to get to where the jobs are. There are other contractors that believe that means something that has to do with the geographical area, the economic conditions in the area, that the area has high unemployment rates, for example. These are completely different sets of factors.

So yes, someone needs to define for the contractors what is meant by this. This is a requirement in the law.

And with respect to determining commitment and aspiration, we have been talking about that all morning. It is one of the four things that we mentioned some time ago in a report on common features of successful job training programs. If the participant, him or herself, is not committed to remaining in the program and getting skills and getting a job, then it certainly lessens the likelihood of success.

So there has to be some way of communicating to the numerous contractors what is meant by these factors. Otherwise, you wouldn't have equitable assessment across the board. You would have people coming into the program in one area that were different from people in others because the contractors are using their own interpretations. And the problem really seems to be not necessarily getting the right people into the program; therefore, we have the high drop-out rates. In other words, we are not getting people into the program that have the commitment that is necessary, or people that could take maximum advantage of the program because of their situation prior to entering the program.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I know we have a vote on.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Yes, we will be in recess. Let's hurry back. We apologize.

[Recess.]

Mr. SHAYS [presiding]. We will reconvene this hearing and Mr. Towns, you have the floor.

Mr. TOWNS. I have GAO's response but now I would like to get Labor IG's response. What measures do you believe should be taken to assure that placement contractors have actually placed someone in a job?

Ms. DALTON. Historically, we have found when we have audited placements numbers, that there has been a fairly high error rate in those numbers. The last time that we audited the placement numbers there was an 18 percent error rate and based on that audit, Job Corps has instituted a verification system where a separate contractor verifies a sample of placements to see whether or not they are accurate, that they have been accurately reported or not, by contacting the student or contacting the employer.

We also feel, though, in terms of looking at the continued benefits of the program, that Job Corps should be continually tracking students, at least a sample of students, in the out-years, to see what has happened to those students. Are they continuing to work? Are they making a living wage?

Mr. TOWNS. Let me ask you, with the new computer system which is used by Job Corps, will that be sufficient to be able to supply us with all this information?

Ms. DALTON. It would be sufficient if it has adequate controls on it to give you assurance of the accuracy of the information that is being put into it. At this time we have not audited that computer system. We did find problems in their prior system and we do intend to be looking at the new system as part of our on-going reviews related to the Government Performance and Results Act.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you.

I am sorry I wasn't here for your statements and I appreciate Mr. Snowbarger's chairing this committee.

I would just like to ask about an attitude, and I am also going to ask the next panel. Why would an organization like McDonald's be so criticized by opponents or supporters of job training and viewed as an example of a dead-end job that provides no value to a participant who works for McDonald's? I would like to know the attitudes of both the IG and the GAO. We will start with the IG.

Ms. DALTON. I believe if a Job Corps graduate obtains a job, that is a positive outcome for the program.

Mr. SHAYS. Start over again, please.

Ms. DALTON. If a graduate, a Job Corps participant, obtains a job, that is a positive outcome of the program. One of the things that we look at, though, is does the person have an opportunity to make a living wage? We believe that is a critical factor for the long-term future of that participant.

Mr. SHAYS. You mean they have to start out, their first job, with a living wage?

Ms. DALTON. No, they don't. We are talking long-term outcome for the program. The fact that they get a job—that is definitely a significant and very positive outcome, if they maintain that employment. Within someplace like McDonald's, there is that potential. They may be making minimum wage at the beginning, but as they continue to work, they could very well be making a sustainable wage.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. If I understand your question——

Mr. SHAYS. It is a trick question.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. I thought it might be. What you seem to be asking is do I or we inherently find anything wrong with working at McDonald's.

Mr. SHAYS. You've got it.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. And the answer is no. But in the context of the issues we are addressing this morning, and that is Job Corps and Job Corps' outreach and admissions efforts and its placement efforts, I think we have to look beyond the fact that someone is working at McDonald's versus someone who is not working.

Job Corps is a very expensive program and whether the Federal Government wants to invest $15,000 or more and then have a person go to work at McDonald's I guess to some extent is a policy call, but that does not seem to be the policy call that has been made so far.

A question also exists as to what happens to that person later. Initially getting a job at McDonald's or getting a job anywhere is not a bad thing, particularly if it teaches someone employability skills that would expand or go beyond what he or she learned at the Job Corps center and helps him or her to understand the importance of getting to work on time and how to treat people, customers and so forth, that that is a good thing.

But if that person doesn't go beyond that or if that person leaves the job at McDonald's because the person is frustrated because he or she cannot go beyond that, it is a problem.

Mr. TOWNS. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. SHAYS. I would be happy to.

Mr. TOWNS. I am happy to hear you say that because my counsel's first job was at McDonald's. Of course, she is an outstanding lawyer now and does a fantastic job but her first job was at McDonald's. She is right behind me.

Mr. SHAYS. I am tempted to say that she would be in front of you, but I didn't say that, did it?

In my own community the typical example of a dead-end job is at McDonald's. If I ever told my dad that I didn't want to work at McDonald's because it was a dead-end job he would have said, "Son, how many hours are you working there?" I would have said, "Fifteen," and he would have said, "It just increased to 20" because he would have known that it would get me up in the morning; he would have known that I would have gotten used to the fact that I am of service to someone else and that I am earning something and that out of what I earn I pay taxes.

He would have known that and he also would have recognized that McDonald's has one of the better job training programs that exists, and the government does not have to pay for their job training program.

In the town of Darien, where I grew up, there are two McDonald's on the through-way. They are the two busiest operations in the top 5 to 10 in the country. They are both run by Spanish-speaking individuals who worked their way up through McDonald's.

And what I have a problem defining is the whole issue of a living wage. If living wage is defined by 40 hours, then none of us should be here because I have never worked 40 hours in my life.

Then I am thinking of the Job Corps and I know it is viewed as expensive; yet I am saying that my daughter, just to go to high school, they spent about $10,000 and if she were in prison they would spend $40,000 plus.

I realize that in terms of other job training programs but on balance, I would like both of you tell me how you weigh the Job Corps as a program versus other kinds of job training programs. Then I am going to go to Mr. Snowbarger.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. We did not do work that would allow us to assess the effectiveness of Job Corps versus any other employment training program. But the issue, as I stated earlier before you arrived, there has been the estimate of 6 million people eligible for Job Corps. Job Corps actually has about 1 percent of that number placed in its centers.

Mr. SHAYS. That is 60?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. 60,000 some, 68,000, I think, in 1997. So obviously, the potential need way surpasses what is being taken care of in the centers.

So the issue is how do you get the people in the centers who can most benefit from being there and most need to be there and who can most benefit because they are capable of benefiting and they are willing? Those are the issues that we have been talking about this morning and the issues we talked about in our statement and in our report.

That is why it is so important that outreach and assessment contractors understand the eligibility criteria, understand what they mean and have a means for assessing applicants based on those criteria.

Mr. SHAYS. The GAO has not looked at comparison programs. How about the IG?

Ms. DALTON. Job Corps itself has had many, many success stories. In terms of effectiveness, you have to look at the population that it is serving. It is serving one of the most difficult populations.

There has never really been a definition of what we expect in terms of overall effectiveness of this program. I think that is something that may need to be done, and hopefully through GPRA and some of the other work that is going on now, that will be accomplished. But in making any assessment of this program, as I said, you have to look at the group that it is serving. It is one of the most difficult populations to serve. Therefore, it is difficult to compare it to other programs under JTPA, for example, that are nonresidential training. Some are short-term programs, some are longer-term programs, but they are serving a different group. Most times it is an adult population.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you.

Mr. Snowbarger.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. I just want to followup on again, Ms. Dalton, one of the statistics that you had in your testimony, one of your examples, the National Plastering Industry's program. Again, that is the one where we talk about on your followup you found out that 98 out of 129 were no longer employed. Then you go on to talk about the fact that some were never employed in that group and that the ones that left ended up with average wages of $2,400 a year.

Anyway, those are a number of startling, to me, conclusions about that particular placement program. And I am wondering if you could maybe give me what your conclusions are. What conclusions do you draw from the statistics that you give us in that particular program and how does that compare with other National training programs? Did you audit those, as well, or was this just——

Ms. DALTON. We haven't audited all of the National training programs. This was just the most recent one. We did audit one program several years ago. It was the International Masons program. Needless to say, we don't think that the results of the plasterers program were particularly successful, and there are certainly a lot of improvements that need to be made in that program.

In particular, we have emphasized followup and placement assistance and that these jobs are in the construction industry where there is quite a bit of turnover. Oftentimes the first job may be a short-term job and we need to provide continuing placement assistance, and also tracking of the students as they are coming out of the program for employment opportunities. That is one of the reasons why the Job Corps historically has contracted with these National contractors—is their placement network, and we don't think that that has borne fruit in that particular case.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Let me rephrase what I think I hear you saying. That is one of the reasons we have gone with some of these National contractors is their placement network and yet, in this particular case, their placement seems to have been pretty close to an utter failure.

Ms. DALTON. That is correct.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. But you are not willing to go one step further and question whether or not the assumption was right in the first place?

Ms. DALTON. I don't think we have done enough work, in terms of looking at all of the contractors. We have looked at this one. Now the question becomes, have we identified this problem and can it be corrected? If not, the assumption may not have been the correct one.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Does your study of the National Plasterers—I am trying to get to both of you here. With your definition of job training versus job placement, you are trained for one thing and you qualify for—or if you are in a particular job, you qualified for having been placed in the same area.

Did you look to see, in the National Plasterer situation, if they were trained to be a plasterer, what job they actually got within the industry and whether or not that required the training or even provided the opportunity for actually using the skills that they were trained in?

Mr. GETEK. Most of the placements were in training-related jobs. We believe and continue to say that the critical issue here is post-placement followup. We don't disagree that there are times when people do not work in the construction industry. The conclusion that we got from this audit, and which we recommended to Job Corps, was they needed to continue to have contact with the students and do post-placement followup. In fact, Job Corps responded that they would like to form a task force in that area and had invited us, the IG, to see what would be the best way to continue in that area. And we agree that that is absolutely necessary in this particular field.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. I guess my question, again, is about how valuable this training was ultimately. Again, since 98 out of 129 didn't even have a job, it is hard to say that it had any value whatever ultimately.

But when they were first placed, was there any indication to you that they were actually putting plaster on walls and ceilings or were they carrying materials? What kind of job within the industry were they doing? Obviously I have never been trained in plastering, but I can figure out how to carry materials into the job site and keep the plasterers supplied. Was that the kind of job they were doing?

Mr. GETEK. I don't know the specific answer, sir. We can get that for you if you would like.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. You do have the information, though?

Mr. GETEK. I know we were looking at the placements to see if they were training-related. We did not have an issue with training-related. What those jobs were, I don't have the answer right now.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Well, just putting the two reports together, my guess is that they were doing things that anybody off the street would be brought in as an apprentice and taught the plastering trade by beginning to carry materials in and watching how it is being done and that type of thing.

Mr. GETEK. If we are saying we had no difficulty with the training-related placement, then it would be within the range that Job Corps had defined, and we had no difficulty agreeing with that definition.

Mr. SHAYS. If the gentleman would yield for a second?

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Sure.

Mr. SHAYS. We will followup on that. We have a pretty good system of following up on requests and we would like you to provide that.

Mr. GETEK. We will see if we can do that, yes.

Mr. SHAYS. One way or the other, we need an answer.

[The information referred to follows:]

U.S. Department of Labor

Office of Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20210

OCT 29 1997

The Honorable Vince Snowbarger
Subcommittee on Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
U.S. House of Representatives
B-372 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Snowbarger:

Thank you for your interest in the Office of Inspector General's work regarding the Job Corps Program, particularly our recent audit of the training and placement services provided by the National Plastering Industry's Joint Apprenticeship Trust Fund. During last week's hearing on Job Corps, you requested a breakdown of the jobs into which the 98 participants were initially placed. Enclosed is the breakdown of the jobs, by occupation, which indicates that most of the participants of the program were initially placed in employment that matched their training. As I indicated during my testimony, our major concern with this particular contractor was the fact that most of the former students in our sample were having difficulty maintaining or obtaining employment at the time of our audit and had received minimal follow-up services after their training and job placement.

If we can be of further assistance to you or your staff, please contact me or Sylvia Horowitz on 219-7296.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Dalton

Patricia A. Dalton
Deputy Inspector General

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Christopher Shays, Chairman
The Honorable Edolphus Towns, Ranking Member

Working for America's Workforce

Analysis of 98 Job Training Match Placements

Job Corps Plasterers and Cement Masons Training Program

	Student Control Number	Job Title Per Employer Confirmation
1.	E060	Construction Laborer
2.	E120	Apprentice
3.	E186	Apprentice
4.	F053	Construction Laborer
5.	F077	Apprentice
6.	F056	Construction Laborer
7.	F105	Apprentice
8.	E185	Construction Laborer
9.	E033	Construction Laborer
10.	E144	Construction Laborer
11.	E205	Construction Laborer
12.	E127	Construction Laborer
13.	E162	Construction Laborer
14.	F038	Apprentice
15.	F133	Apprentice
16.	F037	Apprentice
17.	F087	Construction Laborer
18.	F040	Construction Laborer
19.	E206	Construction Laborer
20.	E126	Carpenter
21.	E182	Construction Laborer
22.	E166	Apprentice
23.	E180	Construction Laborer
24.	F112	Apprentice
25.	E119	Construction Laborer
26.	E213	Construction Laborer
27.	F128	Construction Laborer
28.	F027	Apprentice
29.	E133	Assembler
30.	E156	Construction Laborer
31.	E188	Construction Laborer
32.	E082	Construction Laborer
33.	F086	Construction Laborer
34.	F141	Construction Laborer
35.	F150	Construction Laborer
36.	F020	Apprentice
37.	E038	Apprentice
38.	F099	Construction Laborer
39.	E129	Apprentice
40.	E048	Apprentice
41.	F003	Construction Laborer
42.	F127	Construction Laborer
43.	E032	Construction Laborer
44.	F104	Apprentice
45.	E045	Construction Laborer
46.	F022	Construction Shop Hand
47.	E071	Construction Laborer
48.	F108	Plasterer

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Analysis of 98 Job Training Match Placements
Job Corps Plasterers and Cement Masons Training Program

	Student Control Number	Job Title Per Employer Confirmation
49.	F129	Apprentice
50.	E193	Construction Labor
51.	E173	Construction Laborer
52.	E006	Construction Laborer
53.	E197	Ames Stocker Crew
54.	F153	Apprentice
55.	E003	Apprentice
56.	E005	House Keeper
57.	E172	Construction Laborer
58.	E098	Construction Laborer
59.	F142	Plasterer
60.	F124	Apprentice
61.	F060	Construction Laborer
62.	E151	Construction Laborer
63.	F100	Apprentice
64.	E212	Construction Laborer
65.	F004	Construction Laborer
66.	F005	Construction Laborer
67.	F014	Construction Laborer
68.	E064	Construction Laborer
69.	F001	Apprentice
70.	F024	Apprentice
71.	E034	Driver
72.	E142	Construction Laborer
73.	F130	Apprentice
74.	E124	Construction Laborer
75.	E134	Construction Laborer
76.	E178	Construction Laborer
77.	F107	Apprentice
78.	E073	Apprentice
79.	E055	Construction Laborer
80.	F118	Apprentice
81.	F132	Apprentice
82.	E061	Construction Laborer
83.	E070	Apprentice
84.	E077	Construction Laborer
85.	E114	Apprentice
86.	F088	Construction Laborer
87.	F090	Construction Laborer
88.	E209	Construction Laborer
89.	E100	Construction Laborer
90.	E171	Apprentice
91.	E113	Construction Laborer
92.	F052	Apprentice
93.	F114	Construction Laborer
94.	E072	Machine C[illegible]
95.	E177	Construction Laborer
96.	F054	Apprentice
97.	F097	Construction Laborer
98.	F084	Construction Laborer

Mr. SNOWBARGER. If I can just followup real quickly, you just said you didn't have any trouble with the Job Corps definitions of job training versus job placement.

Mr. GETEK. Training-related placement in this particular audit? No, sir.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Well, I don't know if you have had an opportunity to see the testimony of the GAO——

Mr. GETEK. Yes, sir, I have.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. And I have lost the page. Here it is. I think the example that you gave in your testimony was an automobile mechanic as a key-cutter, a cook as a car hop. I have a problem with that definition because if we are looking for training that puts them in self-sufficient kinds of jobs that earn a living wage, is what you have said is the criteria, training a person as a cook who ends up being a car hop, that seems like training gone to waste.

Mr. GETEK. I think in terms of distinction, if we go to other than the National training contractors, the issue is probably easier to define. The National contractors hopefully have an inroad with the unions and relationships with employers, so one would hope that they certainly could do placements that were training-related.

If we are dealing with the general population other than the National contracts, we have reported certainly in prior reports that when you look at the training-related placement, there is a lot of room to fit what that criteria is. And certainly in the plasterers case it would seem it would be easier to do, as opposed to some of the generalized training that is done in the Job Corps centers and trying to make that training-related.

Ms. DALTON. I think one of the things you see in the National contractors is you are dealing with some very specific trades and some pretty clear definitions of jobs in those areas, so there is a much closer relationship. In the more general labor market you are going to see some more nebulous comparisons and we are working——

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Let me give you an example. Again, it wasn't a National contractor, I presume, but I would think that the category of welder would be fairly specific in the kinds of tasks and job availability and a number of things like that, fairly easy to define and yet apparently the definition for a welder includes an anti-squeak filler—I have no idea what that is; it has something to do with shoes—a casket-liner—I don't think you have to be trained in welding to know how to line a casket, I presume—general laborer, a hacker who lifts bricks of clay.

Again, all of those were classified as meeting the job training that was given to a person as a welder, and I have problems with those definitions. Once we see the data that you send back on the National Plasterers, we will have a little better feel how broad that job placement definition was and maybe it is narrower for those National contractors, but what we see in these other areas I find disturbing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. SHAYS. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Pappas, do you have any questions?

Mr. PAPPAS. Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Blanchette, this is a question for you. It is from your written testimony that was submitted, the second page, the first full paragraph. In it you state that Job Corps needs to improve selection of program applicants in order to decrease the early drop-out rate for program participants. And then the last sentence you indicate that you folks have found that the Job Corps policy guidance for 2 of the 11 eligibility criteria is ambiguous and incomplete, and that paragraph concludes.

I am not sure if this question is best asked of you or maybe of the next panel, but I will throw it out to you. A statement first, I guess, then a question, to tell you where I am coming from.

Prior to my election to Congress I was a county-elected official and I have long maintained that the ability to make a difference in people's lives is best carried out by people in our communities.

I am wondering if the fact that 2 of the 11 eligibility criteria are ambiguous and incomplete and if there is difficulty in having the applicants following through, is the problem, in your estimation, which end of the program? Is it the criteria that is in the centralized bureaucracy or is it in the agencies that are actually not screening people accurately?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Well, in this case the 11 criteria are all factors that get at the nature of Job Corps versus some other employment training program. The two specifically that we are addressing here, one has to do with an environmental factor and specifically one of the features that allows the environment criteria to be checked off, so to speak, is limited job opportunities.

And the interpretation of that is very different, depending on the contractor you talk to. Some contractors interpret it as being limitations because of the individual's characteristics—lack of skill, lack of education, et cetera. Others interpret it to be features or factors associated with the greater geographical area—high unemployment rates.

And there is no guidance that would allow a contractor to know what is meant, what the law meant, what the Department of Labor interprets it to mean or any policy guidance at the Job Corps level that would help the contractor in this case.

This is a feature that is being used, I believe we found, 92 percent of the time. That is the feature that is justifying checking off the environmental criterion.

Now, if you don't understand what it means or it can mean such a broad range of things, then certainly it leaves open the possibility that people are getting into the program that are not the people most in need of being there.

The second criterion had to do with the capability and aspirations, and we have been talking about that all morning. GAO identified in a separate report four features of successful job training programs. One of those was the commitment of the clientele, the clientele's commitment and capability to benefit from the training. That is also one of the eligibility criteria for this program.

If there is no way of really assessing that and no common means of assessing that then again, applicants can be admitted to the program who do not have the necessary capability and aspiration to be successful.

So in this particular instance, no, I would not say that these are factors that perhaps if they were defined at a local level would be more meaningful. They are general. The 11 really have to do with statutory requirements. One is age. Economic status is another. A number of them have to do with basic statutory requirements that allow this program to serve the severely disadvantaged. Others have to do with other ways of getting at that same basic way of defining the people most in need of the program.

Mr. PAPPAS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much.

I just have one quick comment and then I think I will let you close. What I am wrestling with is Job Corps is the most expensive job training program and yet it is dealing with the most disadvantaged, and I understand. It strikes me that no matter how well someone is trained in a skill, they still have to go through some of the most basic kinds of jobs before they get there. I cringe in a way at the cosmetologist who is a hot room attendant giving patrons towels, but in one sense, they are going to go through that process.

My question is: do they go through that process at the end of the job training program or do they do it while they are in it? And if they are doing it while they are in it, I am pretty comfortable with that. If they are doing it at the end, at their graduation point, then I have a little bit of question as to why it didn't happen in the process.

Do you know the question I am asking here? You looked at these programs and this is your chart, correct?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Yes, the chart we included in our testimony and in our report is a chart of possible placements, once someone leaves the program.

Mr. SHAYS. And the program lasts how long?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. It could last up to 2 years. The average we found was 10 months.

Now, I will say that participants leave the program quite often without completing the training.

Mr. SHAYS. Without what?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Without completing the training. They drop out. And drop-outs are placed also, or could be placed, also. So they are included.

Mr. SHAYS. And the drop-out rate is how much? What is the percent?

Ms. DALTON. It is 30 percent.

Mr. SHAYS. Which is extraordinarily high. I mean, considering that their living accommodations are taken care of, they have food—these must be tough kids.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. One of the things we say about the drop-out rate has to do with the early drop-out rate. We found that a quarter drop out in the first 60 days.

Mr. SHAYS. And it is 16 to 24 years old. I will ask our next panel about that issue.

Mr. Towns.

Mr. TOWNS. Basically, I know that especially here, we are always eager to try and compare. I just feel a little uncomfortable when we try here because when I look at the Job Corps program, if I understand it and I need you to help me here if I am off-base, there is a mixture of health care and also supportive services that we find in Job Corps and in a lot of the other programs that we are trying to compare Job Corps with, that is not the case. Am I correct?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. That is correct. Job Corps offers comprehensive services that would include things such as health care, if that is what is needed by the participant.

Mr. TOWNS. So maybe you should caution us about our eagerness to try to compare. Am I right about that?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Well, I don't know about your eagerness to compare. Certainly Job Corps is unique.

Mr. TOWNS. You have heard the testimony this morning; you have heard it from Members here this morning trying to compare. In fact, I think I even tried it one time.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. I have heard comparisons of drop-out rates and placement rates and so forth. I don't know whether or not there are any other areas in which one would want to compare. But we make the point in our statement and in our report that Job Corps is unique.

First of all, it is a residential program. The other programs are not. It certainly aims at serving the most severely disadvantaged. We made that point here several times, and that makes it different than some other programs. And it is a comprehensive program. It aims to reach the participant wherever the participant is in terms of needs. So if it is health care or training someone to be disciplined and punctual, if it is job training, if it is education, whatever is needed to allow the person to be employable.

So it is different than the other programs. I would agree with you.

Mr. TOWNS. And I think we should not lose sight of that. So I yield back Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much.

Do any of the four of you have any comment you want to say before we go to the next panel?

[No response.]

Mr. SHAYS. OK, I appreciate your being here. Thank you.

I will next call Mary H. Silva. We welcome you. Will you be having anyone with you, as well?

Ms. SILVA. No.

Mr. SHAYS. No one else might respond to a question? I am not used to someone not having an entourage.

Ms. SILVA. Perhaps Tim Sullivan of my staff may.

Mr. SHAYS. Why not? Why not have him come up and be sworn in? I'll swear both of you in.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. SHAYS. For the record, both of our witnesses responded. I need your name, sir. I know it is not Mary Silva.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Tim Sullivan.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Mr. Sullivan. And your position is?

Mr. SULLIVAN. Division Chief in the Office of Job Corps.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, it is nice to have you join Ms. Silva. It is nice to have both of you here. You have time to make your statement and we will just roll the clock if you go on.

STATEMENT OF MARY H. SILVA, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF JOB CORPS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, ACCOMPANIED BY TIM SULLIVAN, DIVISION CHIEF, OFFICE OF JOB CORPS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Ms. SILVA. Chairman Shays, Congressman Towns and subcommittee members, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss Job Corps, the Nation's largest and oldest comprehensive residential training program for seriously at-risk young people.

Job Corps seeks continuous improvement in how we deliver our services. Every day we serve 40,000 young people ages 16 to 24, all of whom are economically disadvantaged, nearly 80 percent of whom are high school drop-outs. Almost two-thirds have never held a full-time job. Over 40 percent are members of families receiving public assistance; 70 percent are minorities; 60 percent are young men.

These are at-risk young people with multiple barriers to employment. Job Corps is the only positive alternative for many of these young people. And how do we serve them? We provide academic, vocational and social skills training in a residential setting. We serve young people at 111 Job Corps centers Nationally, including young people from hundreds of communities across the United States, from all 50 States and Puerto Rico.

And what are we accomplishing? The bottom line is we are preparing young people for self-sufficiency and we are always striving to do a better job. We have established integrated performance measurement systems for our outreach contractors, our center operators and our placement contractors. We are implementing a formal performance measurement system for 13-week followup this year so that we will be tracking students 13 weeks after placement.

We have initiated a pilot using unemployment insurance wage records in four States so that we can explore to see whether we can use this type of information and conduct 6- and 12-month followup after placement. We are changing the basis for determining the job training match placements. We have revised the contracting methodology for outreach admissions and placement contractors.

We have implemented a zero tolerance policy Nationally at all of our centers for drugs and violence. We have implemented school-to-work principles at 33 centers and we anticipate adding another 30 this year.

We are increasing our employer connections through establishing work-based learning for our young people, business roundtables, a major employer outreach initiative in the Midwest, connection with One-Stop career centers as they are developed and more direct involvement for employers in the vocational change process.

We are implementing a completely revised curriculum for social skills training, emphasizing employability skills, interpersonal relations, handling conflict and teamwork. We have established a work group to determine options regarding service provision to 16- and 17-year-olds. We closed one Job Corps center this year for chronic poor performance and high costs. We contracted out a federally-operated Job Corps center last year to a private company because of chronic poor performance.

In conjunction with the Office of the Inspector General, we have identified best practices for our Job Corps centers and we are doing so right now for placement contractors. I would hope we would do this for our outreach and admissions contractors in the future. And we have made significant performance improvements in student outcomes over the last 5 years.

GED or high school diploma attainments have increased from less than 12,000 to 16,000 a year. Vocational completion rates have gone from 32 percent to 48 percent, almost one-half. Our overall placement rate has gone from 57 percent to 80 percent. The average placement wage is now $6.21 an hour. For our job training match students the average wage is $6.55 an hour.

We are proud of these results. We have accomplished these results through continuously improving our program based on performance assessments, input from the GAO, input from the OIG, from Congress, from employers and students. We have accomplished these results through more effectively integrating the three major components of Job Corps—outreach admissions, center and placement. We have done that while serving the hardest to serve young people from hundreds of communities across the United States.

Our accountability systems continue to drive performance and we expect our performance in terms of post-program outcomes to improve significantly. The results will be better services for seriously at-risk young people as they prepare for self-sufficiency.

Thank you very much for inviting me here today and I am prepared to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Silva follows:]

STATEMENT OF MARY H. SILVA
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF JOB CORPS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT

October 23, 1997

Chairman Shays, Congressman Towns, and Subcommittee members, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss Job Corps -- the nation's largest and oldest comprehensive residential training program for seriously at-risk youth. I am pleased to provide you with information on the Federal design of Job Corps' outreach/admissions and placement processes and how they are connected with Job Corps centers, particularly as they relate to the GAO report on Job Corps enrollment practices and placement measures. I will also provide you with information regarding the recent OIG performance audit of the Job Corps Plasterers and Cement Masons Training Program.

Many young people need help making the successful transition to the world of work and adulthood -- none more so than the young people served by Job Corps. All Job Corps students are economically disadvantaged and face considerable barriers to success in life. Nearly 80 percent are high school dropouts; 64 percent have never held a full-time job; and over 40 percent are members of families receiving public assistance. Seventy percent are minority; and 60 percent are young men. Eighty-eight percent participate on a residential basis. Job Corps serves over 60,000 young people each year and is the nation's largest investment for at-risk youth.

The program operates through a network of centers, outreach/admissions contractors and placement contractors joined by a shared mission statement, a specific

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focus, and integrated accountability systems. We currently operate through 111 Job Corps centers, but we have a much greater impact because we serve more than 111 communities -- we serve students from all 50 States and Puerto Rico.

Job Corps has a 30-year history of success in providing education and training for these youth to enable them to make better futures for themselves and their families. We are proud of this history and are working hard to ensure that Job Corps continues to improve and to measure up to the critical and complex challenges of helping these young people in the future. We have initiated several actions to address issues raised by Congress, the OIG and the GAO. These focus on: (1) promoting program integration and enhancing accountability; (2) strengthening procedures for outreach, admissions and assignment of youth to centers; and (3) improving placement outcomes and follow-up (including national training contractor programs). I will summarize our initiatives in each of these areas.

Program Integration and Accountability

The Employment and Training Administration places a high priority on measuring and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of all of its at-risk youth programs, including Job Corps. We collect detailed data on Job Corps students through our management information system, we monitor results through an outcome measurement system, and we evaluate Job Corps through rigorous study of costs and net impacts. We provide feedback monthly to our centers and to our outreach and placement contractors on their performance against standards.

Job Corps has a strong student-based performance outcome measurement system which was developed over time with input from the Department's OIG and which, until recently, focused solely on immediate program outcomes, including GED attainment, learning gains, vocational training completion, and job placement or enrollment in further training. These are attainments which are necessary for Job Corps students to get jobs and progress in their careers. During Program Year 1996, over 48 percent of all students completed vocational training and over 16,000 obtained

GEDs. Eighty percent of all students leaving the program were placed in jobs or enrolled in further education; 64% of these were placed in training-related jobs.

Job Corps' performance outcome measurement system is designed to measure student progress from assignment to a center through post-program placement. The system is integrated so that all Job Corps contractors -- outreach, center, and placement -- have standards related to their specific functions as well as standards related to program outcomes. Outreach contractors have standards for meeting assignment goals and 30-day retention rates of students; centers have standards for student learning gains, vocational completion, placement, full-time placement, average wage, job training match placement and 13-week post-placement status. Placement contractors also have standards for placement of students leaving the program, full-time placements, average wage, job training match, and 13-week post-placement.

This system links all phases of the program. The 30-day retention standard for outreach and admissions contractors provides an incentive for enrollment of students who need and are likely to remain enrolled in and benefit from the program. Center operators' performance standards are terminee-based (applied to all participants leaving the program, not just graduates), and successful performance against these measures is heavily dependent on the length of time students are enrolled. Successful performance requires the center operator to appropriately assess individual student needs and to provide the services needed to address these needs so that students are prepared to obtain quality placement upon leaving the program. Job Corps' Vocational Evaluation System (VES) provides an analysis of performance (completion, placement, average wage) by vocation and center to assist us determine whether a training program is meeting both students' and employers' needs. If the analysis indicates a particular vocational training program at a center is not effective, whether it is operated by the center or a national training contractor, the vocational program is put on probation -- and if performance does not improve, the vocation is dropped and replaced with another.

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In order for placement contractors to meet their own performance standards, centers must adequately prepare students, retaining them until education, vocational training and other skills development are complete. Placement and center standards link back to admissions counselors, who must identify capable and committed students.

Job Corps' Outcomes Measurement System (OMS) system ties the efforts of outreach and admissions contractors, Job Corps centers, and placement contractors together in a common goal -- post-program placement. Our experience has shown that the longer a student is enrolled, the more likely he or she is to obtain a GED, complete vocational training, and enter a job at a higher average starting wage than a non-completer. In fact, the GAO report which was just released recommends that Job Corps establish separate placement performance standards for participants who attain different levels of program accomplishment. We are currently issuing separate reports for 16 and 17 year olds to give us an opportunity to analyze their outcomes as compared to those of all other students. We also are considering the establishment of different standards for students based on their level of program accomplishments in view of GAO's recommendation and the workforce development legislation reported out by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, which establishes core measures for program graduates.

Our strong accountability system continues to drive performance, and our improved performance trends continue. Our Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) performance measures also focus on outcomes -- placement rates of students leaving the program and average wage of students entering employment.

To provide longer term follow-up information, Job Corps is working with four States to test use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage data to ascertain student employment status up to one year after he or she leaves the program. Because Job Corps is a national program, in which currently 40 percent of students cross State lines to participate in the program, and because 10 percent go on to education or further training rather than finding immediate employment, we are well aware of the difficulties of relying solely on UI wage data. The pilot project will help us determine the usefulness of UI wage record data in tracking students' post-program employment experiences. We also are working with the OIG to identify other alternatives for post-program follow-up.

Currently, the Department is conducting a major national evaluation of the Job Corps. In terms of national representation, this Job Corps study is perhaps the most ambitious evaluation of a social program ever conducted by the federal government. We have completed the random assignment phase of the study which produced a sample of over 15,000 youth who will be tracked over a four-year period. The first results, which will be a descriptive process study, will be available next year. An earlier independent evaluation done by Mathematica showed that the program returns to society $1.46 for every dollar invested.

Mr. Chairman, we also have taken a number of actions to address the problems of poor performing centers, outreach/admissions and other Job Corps contractors. These include:

- Providing intensive onsite technical assistance to poor performing centers by teams of experts;
- Changing operators of nine centers since July 1995;
- Expanding the number of companies involved in Job Corps through the award of contracts for center operations to eight corporations that never before operated Job Corps centers;
- Revising the procurement system for center contractors to place increased weight on past performance;
- Contracting out the operation of the Iroquois Job Corps Center, formerly operated by the Department of Interior;
- In partnership with the National Park Service, closing the Gateway Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center;
- Recompeting contracts for poor performing outreach and admissions and

placement contractors;

- Dropping recruitment and placement contracts with State agencies that did not perform; and
- Dropping contracts of vocational training providers who did not perform, such as the National Maritime Union.

The Department also is very pleased that two Job Corps Centers -- Hubert H. Humphrey (MN) and Denison (IA) -- were recognized last year, and one center -- David Carrasco (TX) -- was recognized Tuesday of this week along with other exemplary youth programs by the Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet) for their effective practice in youth employment and development. Job Corps will continue to disseminate best practices as an important tool in continuously improving performance among its 111 centers.

Outreach, Admissions and Assignment of Youth to Job Corps Centers

The first step in Job Corps' enrollment process is attracting eligible students into the program. Young people who want to enroll in the program must submit applications through outreach/admissions contractors. These contractors include private for-profit firms, non-profit organizations, and state employment service agencies. Some Job Corps center operators also have contracts to recruit applicants for the program. With the exception of the State employment service agencies, outreach/admissions contractors are selected through a competitive procurement process.

Job Corps recruitment contractors are responsible for conducting outreach, obtaining applications for Job Corps enrollment and parental consent for enrollment of minors, determining applicant eligibility and suitability, and preparing eligible youth for enrollment and assignment to a center. In order to ensure that maximum use is made of Job Corps enrollment opportunities, each recruitment contractor has a specific goal for enrollment of new students. Recruitment contractors must follow Job Corps policy and procedures for determining eligibility and assessing suitability to ensure that the program is serving those it is intended to serve -- severely disadvantaged youth. Job Corps policy is to assign eligible youth to the center closest to their home. Workforce development legislation recently reported out by the Senate Labor Committee focuses attention on development of assignment policies designed to strengthen connections between students' home communities, place of study, and the labor market they will return to.

Job Corps outreach/admissions contractors have formal performance standards which relate to their specific function and which contribute to overall student outcomes as well. The functional standards relate to achievement of contract goals for enrollment of new students. The other standard is a commitment standard, which is a measure based on the percentage of new students who remain at each center for over 30 days.

The commitment standard was established because outreach/admissions contractors bear the responsibility for providing potential students with accurate information about the Job Corps program, the center to which the applicant will be assigned, and what daily life at a center is like. At the same time, we realize that students leave Job Corps for a variety of reasons, including homesickness, unanticipated family problems, or difficulties adjusting to group life and the rules and regulations of a Job Corps center. However, if an admissions counselor is doing his or her job, new students will go into Job Corps with a realistic picture of what center life will be like and will be less likely to leave because the program does not meet their expectations. Outreach/admissions contractors share accountability with centers for retention of students in the program. However, after a student has been enrolled for 30 days, we feel the primary responsibility for retention shifts from the recruiter to the center based on the quality of programs and services it offers.

An April 1996 GAO report entitled "Successful Projects Share Common Strategy" noted that one common strategy of successful projects is ensuring clients are committed to training and getting a job. Currently, applicants for Job Corps must sign a commitment statement indicating they understand that:

- entrance into Job Corps is a privilege available only to those individuals who qualify and show commitment,
- they will have specific responsibilities relating to living in a group environment,
- *they will be on a 30-day probationary period and failure to successfully* perform during that period will result in termination, and
- they must abide by Job Corps' zero tolerance for drugs and violence policy.

In this month's report on Job Corps, GAO makes a number of recommendations to require Job Corps applicants to further demonstrate their commitment. These include actions such as requiring applicants to:

- make and keep interview appointments
- arrive at appointments on time in proper attire
- submit written statements of goals and aspirations
- check in weekly between the time they submit their applications and enter the program.

A number of outreach/admissions contractors already use these approaches, but they are not federally required. We agree with GAO's recommended approaches and will share them with all outreach and admissions contractors.

A second strategy of successful projects identified by GAO in 1996 is removing barriers that might limit a participant's ability to finish training and enter employment. Job Corps begins to address these barriers during the application phase. For example, all students with dependent children that are assigned to centers without child development centers are required to have suitable child care arrangements prior to their enrollment in the program. Job Corps outreach contractors and centers work with students to make sure they have transportation to residential centers when they enroll, and to and from centers on a daily basis for nonresidential students.

Once students are enrolled, centers continue to address barriers to employment through the provision of medical and dental care, counseling and related services; a continuous emphasis on employability through programs such as world of work, leadership and social skills training to help students learn proper workplace behaviors and dress; instruction on money management, saving and budgeting; and job interview techniques and clothing for students leaving the center. Students' counselors, instructors, and other staff deal with problems and issues as they arise. When students leave Job Corps, they receive assistance from placement contractors and from volunteer support services staff affiliated with Women in Community Service and Joint Action in Community Service.

We believe these actions, and the commitment standard for outreach and admissions contractors, are strengthening our admissions process and enabling us to better identify those students who are serious about enrolling in Job Corps and committed to completing the program. Thus, these actions result in improving student retention rates.

In their most recent report, GAO criticized the Department for not providing adequate guidance to admissions counselors for applicants to receive the full benefits of Job Corps. The findings of the report and this hearing provide us with an opportunity to re-examine our admissions process. We will convene a meeting with our outreach/admissions contractors to review existing policies and practices and GAO's recommendations and to discuss how we can best improve guidance and practices to increase the potential for identifying applicants who are suitable and committed to fully benefit from the Job Corps program. In addition, workforce development legislation currently under consideration by Congress establishes more objective Job Corps eligibility criteria. When enacted, new legislation will assist us in providing more specific guidance to admissions counselors in determining applicant eligibility.

Placement and Follow-up

Job Corps makes a substantial investment in education and vocational training of students. Improving participants' employability skills is another common strategy of successful projects identified by GAO. Job Corps students receive an integrated, comprehensive program of academic education, vocational training, social and work skills development (such as how to look for a job, getting to work on time, appropriate workplace dress and behavior) and support services to help them acquire the information and skills they need to obtain and retain jobs or enter further education. To ensure students receive full benefit from their training, placement contractors are responsible for assisting them find suitable employment or enter further education or training when they leave Job Corps.

A number of changes have been made in the Job Corps placement process over the last two years to improve outcomes and follow-up. Placement contractors have formal performance standards for the percentage of students they place in jobs or further education, the percentage of students placed in a job or school full-time, the average wage of all students placed, and the percentage of students placed in training-related jobs.

In addition, a system is under development to follow-up with all students 13 weeks after their placement to verify the placement and determine whether or not they were still working or in school. During Program Year 1996 data was collected, and the follow-up and verification system was revised to increase response rates from students and a performance standard was established for Program Year 1997 based on the percentage of students who are working or in school 13 weeks after their initial placement.

Because of our emphasis on student outcomes, through Job Corps performance standards and the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), Job Corps' placement rate has increased steadily over the last five years from 57% to 80% and the average wage at placement from $5.33 to $6.21. The percentage of training-related placements has also risen over the same time period, from 37% to 62%. Given the severely disadvantaged target group we serve and the fact that our outcomes are based on all terminees -- whether they were for enrolled 1 day or 2 years -- we are very proud of this significant improvement in outcomes.

We continuously strive to improve services and increase positive outcomes for our students. Job Corps is currently working with the Department's OIG on a project to identify and share best practices of placement contractors. This effort is a follow-up to the joint OIG/Job Corps review of centers to identify best practices which resulted in issuance of a report by the OIG last year on best practices of Job Corps center operators. This report was shared with all Job Corps centers.

New Placement-Related Initiatives and Linkages

During the next year, we will be changing our system for identifying training related job placements. We currently use classifications from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles coding system involving over 14,000 codes; we will be changing to a more manageable system based on Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) codes developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics which involves only 1100 codes. We believe this will result in greater accuracy in identifying job training match placements.

We also are expanding our efforts to build new partnerships with employers -- and their associations -- at the local community, regional, and national levels. Linking occupational training with local labor markets is another strategy of successful projects identified by GAO. Increased Job Corps partnerships with employers are expected to result in greater employer involvement in curriculum design, work-based learning and job opportunities. For example, national employers of students from the Glenmont Job Corps Center (located in upstate New York) include the Marriott Corporation, Wal-Mart, and Montgomery Ward. Locally, Glenmont students are hired by employers such as Child's Nursing Homes of Albany, Monroe Muffler, Tire and Brake Distributors, the Omni Hotel and the Bennett Construction Company.

A new employer initiative to increase employer involvement in all facets of Job Corps operations was launched in August and is being piloted in our Midwestern region. Materials will be developed and targeted to increase employer awareness of Job Corps as a resource that can benefit them. This effort also will engage employers in such activities as curriculum design, mentoring and work experience activities. An employer database will be created, and if successful, we will expand the program nationwide.

During the last two and a half years, three Job Corps centers piloted ways to strengthen School-to-Work concepts already incorporated in the Job Corps program and to increase the role of local employers. These centers -- located in Maine, Louisiana, and Oregon -- used different approaches to integrate school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. They succeeded in working with local employers to secure hands-on training and experience and job placement for Job Corps student.

The School-to-Work initiative was expanded to 30 additional Job Corps centers in June. Center approaches to expand use of School-to-Work principles in their operations vary based on the needs of students, local employers, and local communities. Information on the implementation, operation, and performance of each center will be collected, and best practices will be disseminated to all Job Corps centers to strengthen School-to-Work environments --including active local employer participation -- at each center. We plan to expand the pilot to another 30 Job Corps centers by June 1998.

To assist in our continuing effort to improve the quality of placements, several Job Corps centers and outreach/admissions and placement contractors have developed links with One-Stop Career Centers. One-Stop Career Centers provide job, career and labor market information (including access to America's Job Bank on the Internet), referrals for training, and assistance to individuals in scheduling job interviews and in finding employment.

For example, Iowa is a pilot state for One-Stop linkages, and Job Corps admissions counselors are co-located with One-Stop staff in Des Moines, Burlington, Waterloo, and Davenport. In Arizona, students leaving Job Corps are currently assisted by all three Workforce Development Centers in Maricopa County. The Phoenix Job Corps Center uses searchable job banks on the websites of the Arizona Job Service

One-Stop Career Center and the City of Phoenix One-Stop Career Center to aid students in job searches and placement referrals.

A key Job Corps concern is to ensure that former Job Corps students have greater access to follow-up career counseling and referral services. Thus, Job Corps is expanding linkages to strengthen coordination with One-Stop Career Centers, employment services, and other job training, education and employment programs. One-Stop Centers will serve as a valuable resource for referral of eligible young people to Job Corps and for job placement and advanced training referral for former students, as well as a source for local labor market information and for assistance in development of linkages between centers and local employers.

National Training Contractors

Job Corps awards national contracts to eight national unions as well as one building industry association to provide vocational training at selected Job Corps centers across the country. Training is primarily in the construction trades, but national contractors also offer advanced training in automotive repair and in clerical and computer-based occupations.

Some national contractors have provided a range of services to Job Corps for over 25 years. We have continued these contracts, which are awarded in accordance with Federal acquisition law and procurement regulations, because they provide us with access to national networks through the unions and the Homebuilders Association for both union and non-union jobs throughout the country. These organizations offer high quality instruction which is well recognized by employers throughout the industry and opportunities for Job Corps students to be placed in high-paying jobs.

Your letter requested that I address the recently completed performance audit of the National Plastering Industry's Joint Apprenticeship Trust Fund, which indicated that 76% of students placed in training-related employment remained employed with the initial employer for an average of only 100 days. To address the OIG's findings and concerns, Job Corps has implemented the following actions:

- invited the national training contractors to participate in a Job Corps work group next month to address placement follow-up
- provided assistance to the Plasterers program staff to develop a post-placement follow-up system to provide assistance, after initial job placement, to students trained in their programs
- identified strategies to redirect the work of out National Support Contractors (Women in Community Service and Joint Action in Community Service) to improve and strengthen their support of students requiring transition services from the center to home and employment.

We believe the additional post-placement support provided to these students will increase their employment retention rates and long-term employability.

Summary

We continually strive to improve the Job Corps program to obtain positive outcomes for the disadvantaged youth we serve. Performance management is a key to the program's success, and we address performance issues as they arise. For example, we change operations contractors for centers that don't perform, close centers which have serious problems which cannot be remedied, drop vocational training programs that are not successful, and change outreach and/or placement contractors that don't perform. We have made a number of policy and programmatic changes based on suggestions and recommendations we have received from Congress, the GAO and the Department's OIG.

Job Corps has a vision of where it wants to be as we enter the 21st century. Job Corps should be a nationally recognized learning laboratory for best practices to serve at-risk, disadvantaged, out-of-school young adults. Job Corps must be positioned to respond to continuous technological changes in the workplace, to prepare students for the workplace through school-to-work principles of applied academics, contextual learning, and employment. Job Corps must work in collaboration with emerging State and local workforce development systems, and as partners with employers to obtain quality jobs for our students.

Workforce development legislation under consideration by Congress will provide an opportunity to further strengthen the Job Corps program by increasing coordination between the Job Corps and State and local workforce development systems and between Job Corps centers, their communities, and local employers. The House-passed workforce development legislation retains Job Corps as a national program carried out in collaboration with States and localities and establishes specific, objective eligibility criteria for enrollment in the Job Corps program. The Senate workforce development legislation also retains Job Corps as a national program, and requires even greater collaboration between centers and their communities and States, local employers, and State and local workforce systems. In addition, the Senate legislation modifies and strengthens Job Corps center assignment policies for new students, establishes specific core measures for Job Corps which focus on outcomes for program graduates, and requires that Job Corps students receive follow-up placement services for up to 12 months after graduation. Both the House and Senate legislation call for greater accountability with regard to centers through emphasis on past performance in the selection process for center operators.

Mr. Chairman, we look forward to working with you to continue to improve the Job Corps program. This concludes my prepared statement. At this time I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or other Subcommittee members have.

Mr. SHAYS. Let me start by asking how does the Department respond to the legislation that is currently before the 105th Congress? What is your response? What is your guidance to the committee as it relates to the Job Corps?

Ms. SILVA. We have worked in providing technical assistance with the Senate in terms of its approach to providing changes to Job Corps. There are a number of areas in the Senate language, the proposed Senate language, that address concerns about outreach, admissions and about improving our connections with employers in the home communities from which Job Corps students come and we support those.

We have provided technical assistance in discussions about the core performance measures and the followup 6 and 12 months after the students leave Job Corps.

Mr. SHAYS. The basic areas that you have are academic training, vocational training, and the social skills training. I am unclear as to whether someone has on-the-job training. In other words, as part of your program is it on the job or do they go—do they stay in the program and all of a sudden they are in a job?

Ms. SILVA. We have traditionally provided onsite vocational training. One of the things that we are doing now, through our school-to-work centers primarily, and encouraging all centers, is to have students have work-based learning opportunities while they are in Job Corps, off the Job Corps center.

So that is one way that we are working more closely with employers to get work sites, so that young people, while they are in Job Corps, can have those kinds of work-based opportunities.

Mr. SHAYS. When you divide up your cost between the three—academic, vocational and social skills—what represents the bigger cost?

Ms. SILVA. The center operations——

Mr. SHAYS. How would you allocate your resources? Am I right to think of it in terms of academic, vocational and social skills training?

Ms. SILVA. Exactly. There are the three components. And in terms of——

Mr. SHAYS. You don't have to be the only one who answers the questions. You're not taking a test here. Seriously, if you don't mind, I am happy to have——

Ms. SILVA. Social skills training.

Mr. SHAYS. Social skills tend to be the most costly?

Ms. SILVA. Yes. The investment of resources, and that is because social skills training is budgeted in terms of not only classroom experiences, but also the interactions that students have with counselors and with their residential advisers.

So this is one of the unique aspects of Job Corps, is that we have academic and vocational training in the daytime. Since we are residential, 7 days a week, we can have social skills training in life development skills enhanced in the evenings and on weekends, in addition to having them reinforced in classroom.

Mr. SHAYS. Maybe I need to have a better picture. Describe to me the environment these students find themselves in.

Ms. SILVA. You walk into a Job Corps center and there are academic classrooms and there are vocational classrooms. There are also classrooms for health education——

Mr. SHAYS. And they don't live onsite?

Ms. SILVA. Yes, they do; 90 percent of our students live onsite.

Mr. SHAYS. You are really like a university with 40,000 students.

Ms. SILVA. Exactly. It is like being a school superintendent or a university administrator of a residential program where young people come together, frequently for the first time in terms of a group-living environment.

Mr. SHAYS. These must be tough kids, to have a drop-out rate of 30. Either that or the program just must be very ineffective, and I would like to think it is not that.

Ms. SILVA. These are very tough kids.

Mr. SHAYS. But in essence, they are not having to pay. Sometimes when you don't pay you don't always appreciate what you have. They have some kind of small stipend, correct?

Ms. SILVA. Yes, minimal.

Mr. SHAYS. How small is it?

Ms. SILVA. Fifty dollars every 2 weeks.

Mr. SHAYS. But still they can go to a movie. This is the issue concerning the legislation which I asked you about early on. Some of these students come from a distance?

Ms. SILVA. Yes, some do.

Mr. SHAYS. And the issue is how do you localize it? In some cases are we trying to get them away from their home environment?

Ms. SILVA. Yes. In many cases young people need to stabilize by removing themselves from the temptations of the environment in which they live. And sometimes getting them removed from the ghetto or from the barrio, wherever they happen to live, and putting them in a group environment where there are a number of adults to mentor and connect with them, where we have student governments——

Mr. SHAYS. I erred by not going to the Job Corps that we have in New Haven. I should have been there first and we just were not able to make it happen.

Let me go to Mr. Towns. Then I would like to ask some other questions.

Mr. TOWNS. I know we are dealing a lot here with drop-out rates and I think rightfully so because we are concerned to make certain that dollars are not being wasted. But I don't want to lose sight of some other programs that we put money into that have drop-out rates even higher. I would like to put this in the record, Mr. Chairman, the drop-out rates for other educational institutions. Let me just sort of run down through it.

Post-secondary 9-month vocational educational certificate programs, 49.5 percent. Public educational institutions providing associate degree programs, 65.3 percent. Public educational institutions providing bachelor degrees, 44.9 percent. Private educational institutions having associate degree programs, 29.7 percent. Bachelor degree programs, 46.9 percent. Urban drop-out rates for one out of four large school districts, 35 percent.

Mr. SHAYS. What is it in Congress?

Mr. TOWNS. That is even higher.

Mr. SHAYS. Now, where is this document from?

Mr. TOWNS. It is the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, and this was in 1992. It is probably even worse now.

Mr. SHAYS. That is helpful. Thank you.

[The information referred to follows:]

ATTACHMENT 1

Dropout Rates for Other Educational Institutions[1]

Post-Secondary 9-Month Vocational Educational Certificate Programs	49.5%
Public Educational Institution Providing Associate Degree Programs	65.3%
Public Educational Institution Providing Bachelor Degree	44.9%
Private Educational Institutions Having Associate Degree Programs	29.7%
Bachelor Degree Programs	46.9%
Urban Dropout Rate for 1 out of 4 Large School Districts[2]	35.0+%

[1] Note: From U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, 1992. [2] From Policy Information Center of the Education Testing Service (ETS), 1992

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Mr. TOWNS. Let me go over a couple of things that I am troubled by that are coming up. Do you believe that provisions for welfare reform, especially the work requirements, will have any impact or provide any special challenges for Job Corps in the coming years?

Ms. SILVA. Definitely because for a number of young people in Job Corps, they have grown up in families that have received welfare and they are facing a world where there will not be that same safety net of welfare. There has to be a far greater realization that they need to be trained, and Job Corps provides an opportunity for them to get the kinds of skills they need so that in their lifetimes they can be self-sufficient.

I would envision that we will have more young women enrolling in Job Corps than we do now, as they realize that they, too, while they have children, will also be full-time workers.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you. I have noted that you use State employment agencies to assist in recruitment. With all of the other issues facing these agencies, why do you use them? Some people say—not me, though; I don't want to be identified with this—that they are too busy to be concerned about Job Corps' special clients. What is your answer to that?

Ms. SILVA. As the GAO report that was issued today indicates, Job Corps' reliance on State agencies has decreased significantly over the last 10 years as we have focused more on performance outcomes. And we believe very strongly that we need to have outreach admissions counselors and placement specialists who are focussed on Job Corps students specifically.

So we are moving away from using State employment services. At the same time, one of our outstanding outreach and placement contractors this year was the South Dakota Employment Service. So some perform most admirably, but not all, has been our experience.

Mr. TOWNS. You have mentioned the standards for placement contractors. Can you tell us who sets those standards and whether those standards have changed over time? You alluded to it in your testimony, or touched upon it.

Ms. SILVA. The performance standards are developed in the National office of Job Corps based on involvement of our placement contractors and our center staff, through a process where we look at what our mission is and we look at the most effective ways of measuring those outcomes that focus on our mission.

We have five performance standards in the placement area. One is a placement rate for all terminees from Job Corps, from every student who has been in there 1 day to 3 years. We have a full-time placement rate. We have an average wage at placement. We have a Job Training match placement and an average wage for job training match.

Those are set every year. We issue these standards every year in July and we monitor performance against those standards and issue reports on a monthly basis to all of our contractors.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me just ask this very quickly. In our research for this hearing we discovered that enrollees are tested for HIV. Can you tell us whether enrollees who test positive, what happens to them?

Ms. SILVA. Enrollees who are tested positive for HIV remain on center. They are assessed in terms of their medical condition and they are counseled about what being HIV-positive is and what it means. Their behavior is tracked while they are on center but they remain part of the program. They are given medical services and we hope that they acquire the necessary education and vocational training that they need.

Mr. TOWNS. I think these are the things that are not readily known and I have a lot of respect for what you are doing. I want to share that with you. I think when people know about the client population that you are dealing with and some of the problems, I think they will find that it really is not that expensive, based on the health part that you are involved in and the kind of on-going supportive kinds of services. To me, that is different from what other programs are doing.

I applaud you and want you to know that you have one Member on this side of the aisle who is in strong support of you.

Ms. SILVA. Thank you very much.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you. I would like to talk just a second about the drop-out rate. I realize that we cannot have it both ways. There are a lot of different issues.

One, you are a special program. We spend more. So we would like to make an assumption that being a superior program, that the drop-out rate would be low. Yet I am going to also say to you that I believe that you have to have some very tough standards and if you have tough standards, one of the messages to the participants is if you don't measure up, you are out of here. And if you are not out of here and we allow you to stay in, then it is a message to everyone else that you cannot have the standards.

So I don't know if I am going to evaluate—and frankly, when I went into the Peace Corps, our drop-out rate by the time people got back was 50 percent. You know, some didn't make it through training and some got there and then they left.

So I don't know quite how I am going to interpret the drop-out rate issue, but I would like to know, and let me just read this question because it speaks to it. How are outreach and admissions contractors ensuring candidates are committed to participate in training and getting a job? And how are job placement contractors ensuring participant training corresponds with realities of the local labor market? It is a good question. I will just ask it that way.

Ms. SILVA. First of all, outreach admissions contractors, in their responsibilities to recruit young people, inform them about the program. They inform them of our zero tolerance policy for drugs and violence, inform them that if they test positive for drugs, once we test them when they come on centers, if they test positive at the end of 30 days, they are out. There are specific offenses which if they commit, they are out.

So this information is provided up front to the students by the admissions counselors.

We have an applicant commitment statement that is completed by the admissions counselor working with the student and signed by every student before he or she enrolls in the program, where the admissions counselor talks with the young person about the commitments that are necessary for them to make to come into Job Corps.

In addition, we have prepared an assessment tool which is used by admissions counselors for every student, through which they assess the capabilities and aspirations of the young people before they come into the program.

So we do this up front, try to make it very clear to the young people that we want them in, it is up to them, and that if they behave themselves they stay and if they don't, then they are terminated.

Mr. SHAYS. The GAO report had made a number of recommendations regarding a demonstration of the students' commitment and you basically accept the GAO's recommendations?

Ms. SILVA. We find those suggestions very helpful. We are going to share those with our admissions and outreach contractors.

Mr. SHAYS. Then tell me where you disagree and agree with the GAO report, where you would be most comfortable with the findings and least comfortable.

Ms. SILVA. The very strong focus on limited job opportunities and cultural deprivation, definitional issues I think is not as significant a finding.

I believe that limited job opportunities speak to not only the skills that the student may have or may not have, as well as the geographic area. The GAO report says apparently that this is too vague. I don't think it is, so I would take issue with that. We will try to clarify it to the extent we can to make people understand the intention here.

Mr. SHAYS. Just give me a little more detail. I am not fully grasping the significance of their comment and your comment.

Ms. SILVA. In their report they state that Job Corps has not provided significant guidance——

Mr. SHAYS. To whom?

Ms. SILVA. To our admissions and outreach counselors.

Mr. SHAYS. OK, we are talking about admissions and outreach.

Ms. SILVA. Yes, that is the one segment, particularly in 2 of the 11 eligibility criteria, 1 being the determination of cultural deprivation and another being limited job opportunities. They do not feel that we have sufficiently defined those.

Mr. SHAYS. And in terms of who then qualifies to enter the program?

Ms. SILVA. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. You are accepting 1 percent of those who are eligible and they are questioning how you define eligibility, correct? But whether you define it in a way that determines who is the most—do you have a waiting list?

Ms. SILVA. We have a waiting list in a number of centers, not in all centers.

Mr. SHAYS. OK, which is a fascinating thing. That is basically saying a lot of participants have no interest whatsoever, either don't know about you or have no interest in participating.

Ms. SILVA. That is right. And a lot, in terms of the student population we serve, a lot of these young people are disconnected and don't know about Job Corps. And while they may be eligible in terms of their economic status or their school drop-out status, they may not choose to make a commitment to get their lives together.

Mr. SHAYS. Can I make an assumption that the New Haven center is doing outreach to Bridgeport and Stamford, CT?

Ms. SILVA. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. And that they are working with whom in those areas? Would they be working with any group that specializes in employment? Would they have referrals? Would they be sending brochures to referral organizations?

Ms. SILVA. Yes, and working with the One-Stop career centers.

Mr. SHAYS. That is what I meant.

Ms. SILVA. Exactly. And that is one of the unique facets of Job Corps inasmuch as we have 111 centers and while in Connecticut we have a center in New Haven, that center is doing outreach to other communities within the State.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, given that it is residential, in a State our size, I would love to have more, but in a State our size, New Haven is fairly well located. It would probably be better if it was in Bridgeport, but I accept New Haven.

But what I am really having a little bit of trouble grasping is how you could have only 1 percent and in some cases not have a waiting list. That is, I guess, what surprises me. It would seem to me you would be able to have more selection. Maybe you don't have an answer for that but it is puzzling to me.

Ms. SILVA. In some parts of the country we have a lot of waiting lists, lengthy waiting lists. Some students perhaps choose to go to a particular center closer to home and they will be waiting for that and not go to a center farther away. It varies from one part of the country to another.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, this has definitely piqued my interest even more, so I guess I will be visiting the New Haven site.

Ms. SILVA. Wonderful.

Mr. SHAYS. I think of all the things that I can get the most emotional about is thinking about the fact that we have too many kids that don't have any mentors. They have no one in their lives that they can turn to as a good example, no one to help. That is an overstatement. They can go to a teacher who is interested, but I am talking about someone outside of a school environment in many cases. No one who can put their arm around them sometimes and say, "I have succeeded and this is how you do it."

So I, like my colleague, like the concept of Job Corps and would like to see how we can improve it and I know you want the same goal.

Mr. Towns, do you have any other questions?

Mr. TOWNS. Nothing further, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHAYS. Any comment you'd like to make? What I would like to do, I would like to invite you to make a comment, if you would, as well, if you have any general comment you would like to make about the program.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I personally think Job Corps is a sensational program. I think, as this committee has correctly identified, we serve a very difficult population.

One of the exciting and one of the most challenging goals that we have is to take that tough population and shape it, that part of it that we bring into Job Corps, and put them in front of employers, to have those employers make the decision on whether they accept what we have done with those individuals or reject it.

I think, by any measurement, Job Corps has been successful over the years. We are all hopeful it will continue to be successful because of many of the initiatives that are under way now. Not the least of these is increasing the intensity to which employers are involved in Job Corps. We have special efforts under way now that were started in the last 18 months to try and give employers a better understanding of what Job Corps is about. We want them not only simply to be aware of it but to get them involved in the operation of Job Corps centers, to get them looking at our curriculum, to get them looking at the equipment we use, to get them looking at our strategies for teaching that curriculum, to get them to mentor some of our students, to get them to make presentations about what the real world of work is about.

And I think these kinds of efforts, along with school-to-work principles that we are adopting, I think will keep us on the road we have been on and we will be able to meet those challenges.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you. Miss Silva.

Ms. SILVA. I would encourage any of you to visit the three centers we have in this general area. In case you can't do it, I encourage your staff to come out to any of our centers.

I would also like to mention that we have a student in the audience and when you are speaking about mentoring, there is a 17-year-old young man here who is from El Paso. He came up. He is the student body president at the Carrasco Job Corps Center and his center director is one of the witnesses of the next panel whom you invited.

This young man came up earlier this week representing his center because the center was being recognized by the Department of Labor. He is a 17-year-old who wowed all of us in his presentation, in his openness about what Job Corps has meant in his life.

So as we move from one panel to another I would just like to point out Mr. Moreno is standing right back there. [Applause.]

Mr. SHAYS. Sir, are you going to be here for the next panel? Why don't you come on up and sit right up there? We are not going to let you ask questions, but we can have you look at their faces instead of the backs of their heads. Why don't you sit right there. Nice to have you, sir.

Ms. SILVA. Thank you.

Mr. SHAYS. Let me say that Mr. Snowbarger has some questions he wants to ask and I am just going to comment on both of your comments by saying I think there is a degree of success; the question is how successful.

One of the things that I feel is that I am not sure what kind of resources you have to really determine your success over time, 5 years away. It would seem to me that that would be our goal. Another is that we just want to make sure that you have the means to determine how to maximize your resources.

Mr. Snowbarger, it is good to have you back.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. I apologize for not being here for your testimony but I had asked a question to an earlier panel that perhaps was better directed at this panel. As I recall, my concern is with the National nature of the curriculum versus regional or more localized curriculum that is designed to meet that particular job market. I just wondered if you could comment on that.

Ms. SILVA. Certainly. We have curriculum that is designed Nationally with the input from people at the local level. We use our National curriculum as the means to get that curriculum down to local centers and they then can adapt it. They can customize it for the employer needs in their local communities.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Can and do are two different things.

Ms. SILVA. And they do. They do. For example, in the Dallas region, the business occupation training curriculum has been extensively enhanced to meet the needs of the employers in the Southwest, where they have incorporated certain software packages, for example, in that particular curriculum that are necessary and that are used in that part of the country.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. And that example, is that an example of one of our better centers in terms of its success rate in job placement and job training?

Ms. SILVA. That change has been made at the 12 centers in our Dallas regional office, so it is all of the centers in that part of the country that have made the revision to this National curriculum because they think it is necessary in that part of the country.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. But again, in GAO and the Inspector General's analysis of this, we have some centers that are performing well and we have some centers that are not performing well. My question was are you giving me an example of the good stuff? If so, why aren't we spreading that elsewhere?

Ms. SILVA. In that particular region we have some outstanding centers and we have some that are performance-challenged, so it is a mix.

Mr. SNOWBARGER. Performance-challenged. I love government terms.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much for being here. We will be in touch and the pledge I would make on the record is that I will visit the New Haven site before Christmas, and I am going to take Vincent Chase with me.

Ms. SILVA. Terrific. Thank you.

Mr. SHAYS. Now we are going to invite our next panel up. John Crosby, Center Director, Clearfield Job Training Center; Sarah Robinson, Outreach, Assessment and Placement Manager, Hubert Humphrey Job Corps Center; Mary Young, Center Director, David L. Carrasco Job Corps Center; and Sergeant Jerry Bethea, Metropolitan Police Department, Job Corps graduate. It is nice to have all of you here. Thank you.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. SHAYS. It is wonderful to have you all here and we will be a little stricter with the testimony time. We would like you to use roughly 5 minutes, but we can roll with the punches a little bit if we have to.

Mr. Crosby, I think we will start with you and go from there. I know that some of you came from a distance and it is great that you are here.

STATEMENTS OF JOHN O. CROSBY, CENTER DIRECTOR, CLEARFIELD JOB CORPS CENTER; SARAH ROBINSON, OUTREACH, ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT MANAGER, HUBERT H. HUMPHREY JOB CORPS CENTER; MARY YOUNG, CENTER DIRECTOR, DAVID L. CARRASCO JOB CORPS CENTER; AND SERGEANT JERRY BETHEA, METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT, JOB CORPS GRADUATE

Mr. CROSBY. Mr. Chairman, before I present my testimony, in deference to McDonald's and the time of day, I could sure use a Big Mac right now. I just want you to know that.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, you have a good sense of humor, so you are even more welcome.

Mr. CROSBY. Chairman Shays and the distinguished members of the committee, it is a pleasure to speak to you today about the Job Corps and its contribution to American social and economic mainstream.

Almost 2 million American youth have benefited from this program, a program that gives the less fortunate a second chance, and I believe that all of us, no matter our economic or social status, have had a second chance.

I am the Center Director of the third largest center in the country, with 1,350 students and over 25 vocational trades. Education is provided through our high school, which is certified by the State of Utah.

Our students come from primarily 11 midwestern States and California. We also have students referred from 38 States for our advanced training programs and we serve refugee students representing 25 countries where civil war and social strife are common.

Recruiters of Youth Corps youth represent private for-profit, nonprofit and State governmental agencies.

At Clearfield, we work hard to maintain an on-going communication program with recruiters who serve our center. To minimize the early drop-out rate at Clearfield we want applicants to be in relatively good health, to have an ability to benefit from what the center offers and to adjust to being away from home. We, in turn, pledge a safe learning environment, to obtain a quality education and learn a career-oriented vocational trade.

At Clearfield, most of the students are far from home and homesickness can take its toll. We have student mentors, support groups, extensive recreation programs and many clubs and volunteer organizations. My experience over the years has shown that time and time again, the longer the student stays, the better the job match and the higher the starting wage. Job Corps can produce a mature, well-trained worker.

Where I personally have a problem is that we are also responsible for placement of students who stay for a short period of time and/or are 16 years old with little education or training.

Due to our size, we have an outreach and placement team to assist the agencies in recruitment and job placement efforts. We purchase radio and TV ads, conduct interviews, work large gatherings such as State fairs and help out school career fairs, just to name a few. We also help placement agencies locate students after completion, as needed.

At Clearfield, union and Homebuilder Institute trades are offered in which instructors and field coordinators are responsible for assisting students and finding jobs throughout the country. Finally, we have an advanced training program which is operated by the United Auto Workers.

Mr. Chairman, Job Corps has been part of my life for more than 26 years. I have worked at numerous administrative disciplines at several centers, including those located in Oklahoma, Texas, Oregon and Utah. At one time I was the Job Corps' youngest center director but quite possibly today I am the oldest.

The point is that I have been in Job Corps long enough to have seen many changes in both program operations and in the social make-up of the young people we serve. From the different jobs I have held in the Job Corps I have been heavily involved in designing and instituting administrative adjustments to meet these ongoing changes.

The operational changes have been relatively simple but the most dramatic change, having the strongest impact on Job Corps, has been the make-up of our students. Initially, young men and women came into the Job Corps generally motivated to learn a trade and get a job. Their psychological and social background had minimal effects on their training efforts. As center director, my routine day was to be very much involved in meeting with the parents of our students. They came in to find out how their children were doing, how they were learning and to otherwise be involved in the program.

Today it is a very different situation. The routine has gone. The make-up of our students has turned upside down. They are younger, down to age 16. They come from dysfunctional families. They either have one parent or no parents. Fathers are never seen or heard from. The students' social and health experiences have produced personalities based upon poor self-images and an absence of motivation, illiteracy, chemical dependency and criminal activities.

There often seems to be no concept of what you and I know of as the work ethic. Their social skills, so important to being successful and beneficial in their interactions with employers, co-workers, friends and neighbors, often fail to measure up with what could be seen as a minimal level.

My staff and I and our counterparts at other centers spend most of our time dealing with these pressing issues first, so we can get the student into an educational and vocational training mode.

Mr. SHAYS. If I could just interrupt you for a second, just because I am haunted by this, you say today; as opposed to how long ago?

Mr. CROSBY. I started in 1971.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. And it's just been gradual?

Mr. CROSBY. It has been very gradual but it is apparent.

Mr. SHAYS. But when you look now, versus 1971, very different?

Mr. CROSBY. Oh, yes. The parents would be waiting for the students for the weekend trips. They would come up and talk to me. Not only the parents, I knew their grandparents, their aunts and uncles. I knew everybody in the whole extended family. Today that is not the case and it is truly sad.

Mr. SHAYS. Truly sad is right.

Mr. CROSBY Job Corps is not for everyone. The key is our recruiting system. It must thoroughly and accurately identify those negative situations and provide referrals to appropriate services.

It is an unnecessary expense of time and money and individual hope to recruit and enroll a student whose social or medical status will invariably prevent success in Job Corps. Problem students, those having problems beyond what Job Corps can and should address, create a disruptive and negative influence among other students who are successfully oriented.

Thorough recruiting is tied directly to job placement. When we recruit a student who can be motivated to learn, that student stays in the program longer. Job Corps' goal is to train the students to an employable status and then effect a full-time permanent placement in a job that matches the student's training.

This is a short summary of the changes I have seen in Job Corps over the last quarter century. Our National response could, I feel, be more productive by initiating new and expanded recruiting practices. It goes without saying that any program can be enhanced to improve its present outcomes and I would suggest the same holds true for Job Corps recruitment and placement systems.

Enhancements of these systems could include giving strong considerations to identifying centers for 16-year-olds only. They cannot now get their GED certificate or high school diplomas at this age. And because of labor laws and insurance considerations, they generally cannot be placed in full-time employment. It is, for the most part, a no-win situation for everyone—the recruiter and placement agencies, the center and, most of all, the young man or woman who is 16 years old.

Conducting mandatory drug testing as a criterion to eligibility for enrollment. If the youth tests positive, retests would be given in 30 days. If the youth is still positive, entry should be delayed for 6 months.

Institute, at the admissions counselor level, a pretesting for reading and math abilities. Administer the Beck Inventory test for depression, which would save time and money. It is a one-page document that is standard among many mental health professionals. Administering a standardized vocational test.

And on the admissions forms, recruiters should note the local labor demands so that the enrolling students would be guided toward those trades. Approximately 90 percent of our students go back home when they leave the Job Corps.

And last, every prospective student and all recruiters should visit a Job Corps center before entry, to garner some of the ideas of what they would be getting into and what the expectations would be of them.

The tests that I mentioned can be administered in a short period of time and certainly the results would be beneficial to the center by allowing it to immediately start preliminary work with these young people.

Please understand; my colleagues and I could thoroughly expound on all the good that the Job Corps does for the individual students and what it has done for hundreds and thousands of young Americans who are now solid citizens because of this wonderful program. It ranks up there with Head Start, the Peace

Corps and VISTA, and is one of the country's most cost-effective programs. It tells the world that we are still a caring people and that we continually try to improve these programs to meet the constantly changing needs of our young people that we serve.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Crosby follows:]

Testimony of John O. Crosby
Before the Congress of the United States
Subcommittee on Human Resources
October 23, 1997

Chairman Shays and distinguished members of the committee, it is a pleasure to speak to you today about the Job Corps and its contribution to the American social and economic mainstream. I won't go into the history of this 33-year old program because it would take a bit longer than my allotted time. However, it should be pointed out that almost 2 million American youths have benefitted from this program – a program that gives the less fortunate a second chance, and I believe that all of us, no matter our economic or social status, have had a second chance.

As I understand, this hearing is focused on the recruitment and placement of Job Corps students. I am the center director of the 3rd largest center in the country, which serves 1,350 students, who are offered over 25 vocational trade opportunities. Educational benefits are provided through our high school which is certified by the State of Utah. Our students come from primarily eleven mid-western states and California and, due to advance training programs, we have students referred from centers in the other 38 states. We are also a center for refugee students representing over 25 countries where civil war and social strife are common.

The recruiters of Job Corps youth represent private for profit, nonprofit, and state governmental agencies. To name a few, this includes companies like Dynamic Education Systems, Inc., DelJen, Inc., Women in Community Services, Minorities Employment Service, and the Employment Services offices of North and South Dakota.

At Clearfield, we work hard to maintain an ongoing communication program with those recruiters who serve our center. To minimize the early dropout rate at Clearfield, our objective is to let them know we expect new applicants to be in relatively good health, to have the ability to benefit from what our center offers, and to adjust to being away from home. We want these applicants to know they can expect us to provide a safe learning environment in which they may obtain a quality education and learn a career-oriented vocational trade.

Dealing with the number of students that we do, we are aware of the fact that the students are far from home and that homesickness can take its toll. We have student mentors who shadow the new students, making sure they are introduced to the variety of support groups we have on campus, along with an extensive recreation program plus the multitude of clubs and volunteer organizations that are ongoing. We constantly tap new sources to get our students over that commitment barrier. My experience over the years has shown time and time again that the longer the student stays, the better job-match and the higher the starting wage. We produce a superior product in the way of a mature, well-trained worker.

Where I personally have a problem is that we are also responsible for placement of a student who stays for a short period of time and/or is 16 years old with little education or training. It should be noted, however, at Clearfield we place directly out of the center 83% of all students into full-time employment at an average wage of $6.42 per hour.

Due to our size, we have an Outreach and Placement team. We coordinate a yearly effort with DOL regions VII and VIII by assisting the agencies in recruitment and job placement efforts. We purchase radio and TV ads, conduct interviews, work large gatherings such as state fairs, and help out at school career fairs, just to name a few. We also help placement agencies locate students who have completed the program but have failed to show up at the admission counselors' offices for guidance and to receive assistance in finding employment in their field of training.

Another dimension to Clearfield is that we have Union and Home Builders Institute trades in which the instructors and field coordinators are responsible for assisting students in finding jobs throughout the country. Finally, we have what is called an advanced training trade which is operated by the United Auto Workers. Students in the Job Corps program transfer from a smaller center to Clearfield for advanced training after having completed a basic auto program. It is the only school in America where all its training components are ASE (automotive service excellent) certified. The UAW with its contacts places students in factories, automobile agencies and in a multitude of advance training programs such as those coordinated by Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, Toyota and Honda.

Mr. Chairman, Job Corps has been a part of my life for more than 26 years. I have worked in numerous administrative disciplines at several centers, including those located in Oklahoma, Texas, Oregon, and Utah. At one time, I was Job Corps' youngest center director, but it's quite possible that I may now be Job Corps' oldest.

My point is that I have been in Job Corps long enough to have seen many changes in both program operations and in the social makeup of the young people we serve. From the different jobs I have held in Job Corps, I have been heavily involved in designing and instituting administrative adjustments to meet these ongoing changes.

The operational changes have been relatively simple. New responsibilities produced required adjustments in policies and procedures, increased acquisition of materials, equipment, and facilities, and the improvement of administrative supervision and reporting. But the most dramatic change having the strongest impact on Job Corps has been the makeup of our students.

Initially, young men and women came to Job Corps generally motivated to learn a trade and get a job. Their psychological and social backgrounds had minimal effect on their training effort. As center director, my routine day was very involved in meeting and visiting with the parents of our students. They came to find out what their children were learning , how they were doing, and to otherwise be involved in the program.

Today, it's a very different situation. The routine has gone. The makeup of our students has turned upside down. They are younger – down to age 16. They come from dysfunctional families. They have either one or no parent, fathers are never seen nor heard from. The students' social and health experiences have produced personalities based on poor self-image, an absence of motivation, illiteracy, chemical dependency, and criminal activity. There often seems to be no concept of what you and I know as a work ethic. Their social skills, so important to a successful and beneficial interaction with employers, co-workers and friends and neighbors, often fail to measure up to what could be seen as a minimal level. My staff and I, and our counterparts at other centers, spend most of our time dealing with these pressing issues first so we can soon get the student into educational and vocational training mode.

Job Corps is not for everyone, however, it is designed to address many social and medical shortcomings so common in today's youth. Fortunately, our society has expanded other programs and facilities that are geared to deal with the most serious mental health and behavioral problems beyond the capabilities of Job Corps. The key is our recruiting system. It must thoroughly and accurately identify those negative situations and provide referrals to appropriate services. It is an unnecessary expense of time, money, and individual hope to recruit and enroll a student whose social and/or medical status will invariably prevent success in Job Corps. Every center surely faces this situation with several new students who make up each weekly intake. Problem students, those having problems beyond what Job Corps can and should address, create a disruptive and negative influence among other students who are success-oriented.

Thorough recruiting is tied directly to job placement. When we recruit a student who can be motivated to learn, that student stays in the program longer. Each training area requires a minimum amount of time to get the student through its various levels of achievement. The ultimate outcome of longevity is successful completion and that means the job entry skill level employers require. Job Corps' goal is to train the student to employable status and then effect a full-time, permanent placement in a job that matches the student's training.

This is a short summary of the changes I've seen in Job Corps over the last quarter century. Our national response could, I feel, be more productive by initiating new and expanded recruiting practices to meet today's needs by Job Corps and the youth it serves. It goes without saying that any program can be enhanced to improve its present outcomes. And I would suggest the same holds true for Job Corps' recruitment and placement systems. Enhancement of these systems could include:

a. Giving strong consideration to identifying centers for 16 year old students only. They cannot now get their GED (General Education Development) certificate nor high school diploma at this age, and because of the labor laws and insurance considerations, they generally cannot be placed in full-time employment. It is, for the mos part, a no-win situation for everyone – the recruiting and placement agencies, the centers, and, most of all, the young man or woman who has just turned 16.

b. Conducting mandatory drug testing as a criterion to eligibility for enrollment. If the youth tests positive, re-test would be given in 30 days. If the youth is still positive, entry should be delayed for six months.

c. Instituting, at the admission counselor level, a "PRE-TESTING" for reading and math abilities, utilizing the Slosson test, for example.

d. Administering the Beck Inventory test for depression would save time and money, and it is a one-page document that is the standard among many mental health professionals.

e. Administering a standardized interest test such as the Strong-Campbell, Kuder, Jackson, or COPES (Career Orientation Placement and Evaluation Survey) for vocational interest.

f. On the admission form, recruiters should note the local labor demand so the enrolling student would be geared to training toward those trades. Approximately 90% of our students go back home when they leave the Job Corps.

g. Every prospective student should visit a Job Corps center before entry to garner some idea of what they will be getting into and what the expectations for them will be.

The tests that I mentioned can be administered in a short period of time and certainly the results of which would be beneficial to the center by allowing it to immediately start important preliminary work with these youths.

Please understand, my colleagues and I could thoroughly expound on all the good that Job Corps does for the individual student and what it has done for hundreds of thousands of young Americans who are now solid citizens because of this wonderful program. It ranks up there with Head Start, the Peace Corps and VISTA and is one of our country's more effective government-funded training programs. It tells the world we are still a caring people and that we continually try to improve these programs to meet the constantly changing needs of the young people we serve.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you. You have a good sense of humor and you also were very astute to mention the Peace Corps.

Mr. CROSBY. After I retire, sir, I'm going to give it a shot.

Mr. SHAYS. You would be a great volunteer.

I think what we will do is we will vote and we will come right back, so we will adjourn. We stand in recess.

[Recess.]

Mr. SHAYS. Calling the hearing to order, Miss Robinson, why don't you begin?

Ms. ROBINSON. Thank you. Chairman Shays and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you to discuss Job Corps. My testimony today is based on my 4½ years of experience as the Outreach, Admissions and Placement Manager for the Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc., office located at the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center in St. Paul, MN.

While you have my written testimony detailing the outreach, admissions and placement process, there are a few points I would like to reiterate.

Outreach is a comprehensive system of activities designed to communicate information about the Job Corps program to eligible youth, influencers of youth, agencies, youth organizations and the general public. In order to successfully recruit youth for Job Corps, the admissions counselors must develop a comprehensive list of referral sources—those organizations that have daily contact with youth, such as schools, human service agencies, welfare departments, employment service offices, One-Stop Shops and youth organizations. This referral network must be nurtured by establishing on-going contact with them.

In order to provide better State-wide coverage, we have established an office in Duluth, MN, to cover northern Minnesota and an office in Rochester to cover southern Minnesota. It is important to note that the Rochester office is closely aligned with the One-Stop in southeast Minnesota. This connection ensures that Job Corps is effectively promoted throughout the 11 counties in southeastern Minnesota served by the One-Stop Shop youth counselors. We have also made it a priority to establish other connections with the Minnesota One-Stop Shops to ensure complete coverage throughout the State.

These connections are extremely important in assisting and reaching youth who may benefit from Job Corps. The youth we serve have few, if any, support systems. They live in horrendous conditions and they have experienced a great amount of failure in their lives. It isn't easy for them to call Job Corps, to face another potential rejection. These agency connections are their first line of their support.

The admissions process is often lengthy and time-consuming. The admissions counselor must establish rapport with each applicant during the interview process to make a full and complete assessment of a student's potential success at Job Corps while also determining if the applicant meets all 11 eligibility criteria.

I understand that there are some questions about 16- and 17-year-olds participating in the Job Corps program. While I admit they bring a unique set of problems with them, I believe Job Corps is a viable option for them. However, I also believe Job Corps provides greater benefit to older students, who may be more self-directed.

A second question is how admissions counselors determine an applicant's capability and aspiration to participate in Job Corps. The tool we use provides a tangible assessment of the applicant which, if coupled with observations made by the admissions counselor, should provide evidence of the applicant's eligibility under this criterion.

Other efforts to support recruitment and retention of students are center tours, assisting a center with 30-day retention and promoting the Humphrey Job Corps Center as a Minnesota resource.

Placement really begins during the admissions process, when students are told that Job Corps is a job training program designed to provide them with the skills to be fully employed upon completion. Once students enroll in Job Corps, the placement staff meet with them during their orientation phase to discuss placement goals, a career plan and placement services. Additionally, a career development plan is put together to help guide the student's academic and vocational education.

The attitude that placement is something that happens after training has become obsolete. Staff and students now view placement as a process which parallels and focuses their educational, vocational and social skills training. By the time a student is ready to terminate, they should be well versed on placement services.

Unfortunately, some youth do not complete their training, and noncompleters can be difficult to place. They may lack motivation, lack education and skills to get a job, or they may have family problems that make it difficult or impossible to work. The placement person must expend a disproportionate amount of time and effort placing these students, and the results are frequently disappointing. Whatever the situation is, the goal is to place students in full-time positions that match their training.

Please understand that many students have never been employed or have had a poor work history prior to enrolling in Job Corps. Job Corps' mission is to provide students with the skills to become self-sufficient. Our priority is to place students in positions that match their training, as they would have the skills to allow for greater success and growth within that job. But even if it is not a job training match, the student may have learned very valuable skills, including motivation to find employment and be self-sufficient.

The Department of Labor has set standards that we, as placement contractors, strive to meet or exceed. These standards are necessary to provide accountability and measurable results. This system drives our behavior and I believe this is a strength of Job Corps. I also believe there is no other program anywhere else that can match the Job Corps measurement system.

Job Corps provides youth with much-needed skills to become successful in the workplace, but we must always remember that Job Corps was designed to serve disadvantaged youth who have had difficulty in obtaining or keeping a job.

Over the past 4½ years I have seen many changes in Job Corps that have brought about increased accountability and results. Job Corps is a successful program, and I am very proud to be part of a program that effectively assists young people in getting on their feet.

I have detailed in my written testimony the outreach, admissions and placement procedures, as well as enhancements and suggestions for increased performance. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Robinson follows:]

Testimony of Sarah P. Robinson
Before the United States House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight,
Subcommittee on Human Resources
October 23, 1997

Chairman Shays and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you to discuss this very important program. I appreciate this committee's interest in Best Practices in Recruitment and Placement, and I thank you for the opportunity to share with you some of Job Corps' successes.

My testimony today is based on my four and one-half years of experience as the Outreach, Admissions and Placement Manager for the Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc. (DESI), office located at the Hubert Humphrey Job Corps Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. The Humphrey Center offers 300 students a variety of career training options (five vocations), as well as advanced training programs to provide students with more specialized and diverse educational opportunities, while also meeting employers' demands for higher-skilled workers.

I have been asked specifically to speak on outreach, admissions and placement. What follows is a detailed description of the systems put in place to enable staff to more effectively perform their jobs.

Outreach

Outreach is a comprehensive system of activities designed to communicate information about the Job Corps program to eligible youth, influencers of youth, agencies, youth organizations and the general public. In order for Job Corps recruiters, known as Admissions Counselors, to be successful, they must effectively promote Job Corps with their outreach events and activities.

Initially the Admissions Counselor develops a comprehensive list of referral sources – organizations or agencies that have daily contact with youth. These primary contacts may include schools, human service agencies, welfare departments, employment service offices, One-Stop Shops, and private, nonprofit organizations serving youth and their families. It is also equally important to make connections with secondary contacts who interact frequently with youth, but in a limited capacity. These contacts include churches, city councils, neighborhood committees, women's shelters, public housing authorities and military recruiters.

Once these contacts have been made, the Admissions Counselor must deliver the message about Job Corps and the services we provide. The Admissions Counselor accomplishes this by making presentations, establishing connections and maintaining the referral source network. Maintenance of this network is a fundamental component of all successful outreach efforts. Referrals are a product of relationships that have been built on trust. Admissions Counselors continually strive to nurture these relationships through a number of activities including:

a. Providing agencies with Job Corps literature.
b. Keeping referral sources updated on any changes or activities happening with Job Corps.
c. Providing agencies with feedback on the youth they have referred.
d. Being available for on-site visits to take applications, update staff, and make presentations.

e. Making presentations at statewide conferences for such professions as social workers, financial workers, school counselors, alternative learning educators and youth workers.

The development and implementation of an effective outreach program is time consuming, but also quite necessary in order to successfully recruit a diverse youth population. Minnesota is a predominately rural state, and we want to ensure that all our youth have the opportunity to utilize Job Corps and hear our story. Outreach activities provide our referral sources with the information necessary to educate youth about Job Corps.

In addition to our office at the Humphrey Center, we have established two off-campus offices to provide better statewide coverage. There is an office in Duluth to serve Northern Minnesota and an office in Rochester to serve Southern Minnesota. It is also important to note that the Rochester office is closely aligned with the One-Stop Shop in Southeast Minnesota. This connection ensures that Job Corps is effectively promoted throughout the eleven Southeast counties served by the One-Stop Shop youth counselors. We have made it a priority to establish other connections with the Minnesota One-Stop Shops to ensure complete coverage throughout the state.

Establishing these connections is not easy. Many agencies become so involved in working with their local youth, they often don't think beyond the scope of what is available in their own community. We must maintain a constant presence in these communities and keep the connection in order for them to truly utilize and think of Job Corps as a local resource. My staff and I have made these connections, and we often hear about youth they work with who may benefit from Job Corps. We must remember that we are working with disadvantaged youth – youth who have few (if any) support networks, youth who live in horrendous conditions at home or in communities where it is common to hear gunfire and see drug dealing. We work with youth who have experienced a great amount of failure in their lives, and when they hear about Job Corps they begin to visualize some hope for the future. Job Corps becomes their dream for getting out of the darkness in which they live. After hearing stories from the youth we enroll, I am amazed that they made it to Job Corps at all. I can only imagine how much courage it takes for a young person to come to our office and face another potential rejection. Making the decision to call Job Corps is, for some, one of the biggest decisions they have ever made, so it is crucial that these youth have support and encouragement to enroll. These agency connections are the first line of that support.

Admissions

Clearly, not all people interested in enrolling in Job Corps are eligible, so it is imperative to establish a system that will assist in screening appropriate and eligible youth into the program. In Minnesota we have set up a series of steps a youth must follow in order to enroll in Job Corps. It is important to note here that (1) the DESI Minnesota contract is a subcontract primarily responsible for recruitment and placement for the Humphrey Job Corps Center and (2) Department of Labor, Region V has also established a goal to have 80 percent in-state enrollment, which means that the majority of the youth we recruit do enroll in the Humphrey Center. Our systems are based on these two facts.

Pre-Screening

Each youth who calls the Job Corps office is asked a series of questions designed to enable the office to make a preliminary surface-level assessment of the youth's eligibility for Job Corps (Attachment 1). Questions encompass such areas as previous hospitalization, prior treatment for drug or alcohol abuse, court history, age and income level. At this time we also answer any questions a youth may have about our program. If the youth appears eligible at this level and is interested in applying for enrollment, we ask the youth to bring in several items: picture ID, social security card and several alternative contacts (name, address and telephone number). Additionally, the youth is told to dress in appropriate interview clothing and to arrive on time. If the youth is unable to arrive at that time or date, he or she is instructed to call and reschedule. This in itself is a screening tool to observe the youth's attitude toward professional appointments.

Pre-Application and Interview Assessment

When the youth arrives, he or she is instructed to watch a video about our center which may answer (or raise) questions about the center or the program. After viewing the video, the youth completes a comprehensive questionnaire called the Applicant Information Sheet (Attachment 2) to enable the Admissions Counselor to have a better understanding of the youth's past and/or present situation. These questions cover such areas as school issues, mental health and medical problems, drug and alcohol use, court history, and vocational choices.

Interview

The Admissions Counselor then meets with the applicant and together they review the applicant's responses. At this time, the Admissions Counselor may determine that the youth is not eligible based on the answers, that further information is necessary to make a determination of eligibility, or that the application process may proceed. The Admissions Counselor makes a notation whether or not the applicant supplied all the requested documents as this assists in determining the youth's commitment level and willingness or ability to follow directions. In the event that a youth appears immature or has not followed through with obtaining the requested documents, the Admissions Counselor may ask the applicant to write an essay (Attachment 3) outlining their employment goals and what they hope to gain by coming to Job Corps. This essay will be used later to help determine the capability/commitment level of the applicant.

The interview process is designed to allow the Admissions Counselor to establish a rapport with the applicant, answer any questions the applicant may have and determine eligibility at a deeper level than the phone screening tool. It is during this interview that the Admissions Counselor and applicant will make the decision to complete the application and move toward enrollment in Job Corps.

Application Process

The application process is fairly straightforward and primarily involves the national computerized application system that each Admissions Counselor uses. There are eleven eligibility criteria:

1. **Age.** The applicant must be at least 16, but not yet 25, on the day of enrollment.

2. **Economically Disadvantaged.** The applicant must receive or be a member of a family

receiving public assistance, be a foster child or ward of the court, or have income that does not exceed either poverty guidelines or 70 percent of the lower-living standard income level.

3. **Selective Service Registration.** All male applicants 18 years of age or older must register with the Selective Service System in order to participate in Job Corps.

4. **Legal United States Resident.** The applicant must be a legal resident of the United States.

5. **Requires Additional Education/Training.** The applicant must be in need of further academic or vocational training, or support services in order to participate successfully in a job, in school or other training program, or in the military.

6. **Environment.** The applicant must live in an environment, home or community with significant obstacles that prevent successful participation in school or other programs or prevent obtaining or keeping a job.

7. **Health History.** The applicant must be free of any serious medical, psychological or dental condition that would interfere with his or her ability to participate in the Job Corps program or would interfere with other students' participation in the program. If an applicant has been hospitalized for a mental health or substance abuse condition, he or she must wait six months from release to be eligible to apply. An applicant who is more than three months pregnant may not be approved for or allowed to enroll in Job Corps.

8. **Behavioral Adjustment History.** The applicant must be free of behavioral problems so serious that he or she could not adjust to the center, would prevent others from benefitting from the program, would require face-to-face supervision from the court system or has court-imposed financial obligations.

9. **Child Care.** If the applicant has dependent children, arrangements must be made to ensure that the children will have adequate care as long as the applicant is enrolled in Job Corps.

10. **Parental Consent.** An applicant of minor age must have the written consent of a parent or legal guardian, or be an emancipated youth if under the age of 18.

11. **Capability and Aspirations to Participate.** The applicant must have the ability and motivation necessary to complete the program and benefit from Job Corps.

Each of these eligibility requirements must be met in order for an applicant to be accepted into the Job Corps program. It is important to remember that the disadvantaged youth we serve come from environments that make it difficult to move ahead in life.

One young woman we worked with was responsible for her younger siblings because her mother was addicted to drugs. Another applicant, age 17, had been on her own for several years after her mother, a gambling addict, abandoned her and moved to Las Vegas. We have seen youth come from areas so impoverished or crime-ridden that they find living on the streets safer than living at home; youth who want to escape a life of gangs and drugs; youth who have failed school and dropped out because they were told they would never amount to anything.

The Admissions Counselor must filter through the facts to determine the applicant's eligibility. It is surprising how honest these youth are about their current life situation, and their stories are often heartbreaking to hear. We see youth who are so afraid of rejection that when they speak, their voices are so soft that one must strain to hear them. We also see youth full of bravado, desperately trying to prove that they will be good students in spite of their background. Admissions Counselors must be sensitive, compassionate listeners while also being pragmatic about the students' potential success in Job Corps.

There are concerns about the admissions process, which I will address below.

Are 16- and 17-year-olds appropriate for Job Corps?

Yes, although some bring with them a unique set of problems because of their age and lack of maturity, parental support and education. There are very few programs available for this age group, and I believe Job Corps is a viable option for many of them. Youth in this age group change jobs frequently and do not have the work experience or skills to make career decisions. Job Corps' strength is that it offers not just vocational training but also social skills training and education. The extra steps we take with 16- and 17-year-olds help us identify those that may stay longer. We ask that they bring in their school records and write an essay on why they want to enroll in Job Corps. Those that follow through may very well benefit from and complete our program. The reality is that youth in this age bracket are more difficult than older youth, and while I believe Job Corps can play a role in the lives of 16- and 17-year-olds, Job Corps provides greater benefits to older students who may be more self-directed.

Is the Capability and Aspirations Assessment Tool (CAAT) (Attachment 4) an effective tool to determine commitment level?

The CAAT form allows the Admissions Counselor to determine if an applicant has followed through on expectations such as obtaining needed documents and having a good attitude. The observations and judgment of the Admissions Counselor are critical in determining the applicant's current attitude. What we see on paper (school records, health history, court involvement) may be an accurate reflection of the applicant's past, but these documents may not accurately portray his or her current situation.

The Admissions Counselor can make a comprehensive judgment based on the CAAT and all other interactions with the applicant as well as other documentation collected for the application such as school records. We must determine capability by assessing whether the applicant has the mental ability and desire to successfully complete the Job Corps program. We note each applicant's attitude, dress, questions asked, enthusiasm, goals, and expressed willingness to follow all the rules.

The CAAT is designed to measure those characteristics that are generally displayed by individuals who are likely to benefit from the program. The CAAT provides a tangible assessment of the applicant which, if coupled with observations made by the Admission Counselor, should provide evidence of the applicant's eligibility under this criterion. Yes, it is a judgment call based upon knowing the demands of life on center, the desired results, and the potential of the applicant.

How is the environment eligibility factor determined with applicants?

Admissions Counselors must determine eligibility by personally assessing whether one of the provisions characterized by a "poor" environment does impact on the applicant and is an appropriate basis for eligibility. We may determine this by in-depth discussions with the applicant, personal knowledge of the community, counseling records or other information available. Applicants are asked to select the environmental factors which fit their life situation, and they pick one or more.

I understand that "limited job opportunities" is the environmental factor most often selected. This factor means that the applicant does not have the skill level to obtain gainful and meaningful employment in their community. It may also mean that there is substantial unemployment or a lack of jobs in the community in which they reside.

Other Efforts to Support Recruitment and Retention

Center Tours. One of the most significant methods to increase retention of students is to provide tours of the center whenever possible. We have a program called "Pre-Orientation to Job Corps" which we hold weekly. This three-hour program provides applicants the opportunity to meet with a representative from each department on center who goes over the rules, expectations and other issues that may impact their life on center. They then receive a comprehensive tour of the center and eat lunch in the student cafeteria. We call this our "no surprise" policy. This policy also includes our two off-campus offices where they provide photos of the center, show a center video and spend additional time discussing life on a Job Corps campus. We believe that students need to be fully informed about the realities of Job Corps life in order to make the decision to enroll. This program is also open to social workers, parents, friends and anyone who really wants an in-depth understanding of Job Corps. This program is mandatory for all youth residing within a 30-mile radius of the center and is highly recommended for all applicants. Current Job Corps students also participate in the pre-orientation activities to answer any questions from a student's point of view.

In-State Enrollment. The Department of Labor, Region V, state-based recruitment policy establishes the goal that all centers be comprised of 80 percent in-state enrollment. The policy ensures improved access for students, parents, employers and service organizations to the Job Corps centers in their state. Outreach, admissions and placement contractors are able to develop very close alliances with the center in order to provide better service to students and the center. This also allows 20 percent of each center's population to be comprised of out-of-state students to account for center capacity, vocational offerings, parental preferences, family needs, medical conditions and waiting periods for center openings.

Thirty-Day Retention Strategies. When a student enrolls in Job Corps and then leaves in the first thirty days, the Admissions Counselor and the center counselor contact the student to determine the reason for leaving. Some of the issues can be easily resolved (such as wanting a new roommate) while others are more significant. The Admissions Counselor and the center counselors work together to develop a plan to bring the student back and fully inform the student of all the benefits of staying in Job Corps.

The first thirty days are difficult. Some of our students have lived independently for several years with no rules, no parameters and no expectations. Suddenly they are thrust into a situation where they are expected to be out of bed at 6:30 a.m., have their room clean, have showered, have eaten breakfast, and be in class by 8:00 a.m. They must also cope with drug testing, observe a curfew and interact with students from different cultures while living in an environment foreign to them.

We ask students to make tremendous changes in their lifestyles, and it is often frightening and confusing. We like to believe that parents would be supportive of their children's staying in Job Corps, but, sadly, this is often not the case. I recall a young woman who had a very difficult time staying focused at Job Corps, and she kept leaving, thus putting her future at Job Corps at serious risk. After speaking with her several times, she finally admitted that she was the first person in her family who had attempted to get a GED and get off welfare. One would think that her family would be quite proud of her, but instead they ostracized her and threatened her because they felt she was trying to be better than them. She had to choose between her future and her family. What a difficult decision that would be for anyone, and what courage it took for her to ultimately choose Job Corps.

Commitment to Serve the State. The Minnesota outreach, admissions and placement contract has made a commitment to the Humphrey Center, Minnesota youth and our agency network to provide quality services consistent with our mission to make the Humphrey Center a Minnesota resource. As mentioned previously, we have spent considerable effort traveling throughout Minnesota meeting with people who need to hear about our program. We cannot afford to sit in our office and wait for the phone to ring. Our close connections with the center, our commitment to Minnesota youth, and our desire to build networks across the state have enabled us to keep the center filled with youth who are willing to make the commitment to Job Corps.

Placement

Placement really begins during the admissions process when students are told that Job Corps is a job training program designed to provide them with the skills to be fully employed upon completion. As we discuss their goals and aspirations, we let the students know that by coming to Job Corps they are making the commitment to become more employable. We even have the students sign an employer release form (Attachment 5) that will allow us to talk with their employers to verify their placement and follow up with them. Students acknowledge that their goal is to obtain full-time meaningful employment when they terminate from Job Corps.

Once students enroll in Job Corps, the placement staff meet with them during their orientation phase to discuss placement goals, a career plan and placement services. Additionally, a career development plan is put together to help guide the students' academic and vocational education. This ensures that students enter Job Corps in the frame of mind to begin working toward employment goals. Throughout students' enrollment in Job Corps, they receive reminders of the placement services they will be receiving. The attitude that placement is something that happens after training has become obsolete. Staff and students now view placement as a process which parallels and focuses their educational, vocational and social skills training.

The Humphrey Center has developed many systems to prepare students for placement. One such system is called School, Transition, Employability and Placement (STEP). STEP was our response to keeping pace with the national trend in school-to-work programming. The STEP team, which consists of representatives from the center's educational, vocational, counseling, student records, and placement departments, refocuses the center's efforts toward the goal of increasing high-quality placements. Initiatives of the team include developing career portfolios for the students, emphasizing applied academics and work-based learning, expanding work experience and holding transitional living classes.

By the time a student is ready to terminate, he or she is well-versed in the placement services and is ready to complete the job search phase. The job search consists of reviewing job leads we have obtained for each of the vocational trades offered, an Internet job search, registering with the State Employment Service, reading through classified ads and determining a plan of action for their employment. We may also provide guidelines for preparing cover letters and resumes, filling out applications, interviewing, obtaining references and other job-hunting skills.

Unfortunately, some youth do not complete their training due to drug or alcohol use, violence, or an inability to conform to Job Corps rules and expectations. Some, quite simply, drop out. Non-completers are always difficult to place. They may not have the motivation, they may be soured on their Job Corps experience, they may lack the education and skills to get a job, or they may have family problems that make it difficult or impossible to work. The Placement Specialists expend a disproportionate amount of time and effort to place these students, and the results are frequently disappointing. This scenario of high demand for low results also reduces the time the Placement Specialists can devote to motivated graduates who have completed their training.

When a student is terminated, it becomes the responsibility of the Placement Specialist to locate and educate the student as to what is expected of him or her. Whenever possible, face-to-face counseling is utilized. When travel distances preclude face-to-face meetings, counseling is conducted over the telephone. When telephone counseling is necessary, the Placement Specialist must ensure the student receives adequate time and resources as would be allotted for face-to-face counseling.

Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc., has established a series of steps that each Placement Specialist must take to properly counsel students. These steps are outlined below:

Step 1: Get acquainted with student and establish a measure of trust.
Step 2: Learn the student's needs.
Step 3: Make the student aware of current employment trends.
Step 4: Be realistic with the student regarding employment.
Step 5: Discuss what must be done to reach the student's goal.
Step 6: Develop a plan of action.
Step 7: Leave the student feeling positive about the counseling experience.

Students should not be sent out on interviews until they can demonstrate the ability to:

- Communicate effectively.
- Complete an employment application.

- Clothe and groom themselves appropriately for the positions for which they are applying.
- Understand and practice business etiquette.

The fact that we are located on the Humphrey Center is important. Our Placement Coordinator has thorough and easy access to student records, instructor feedback and evaluations of the student. Our location also enables us to develop partnerships with employers that may involve the employer meeting with the students, touring the center, providing instruction on interviewing and discussing employer expectations.

It is imperative for students to obtain work experience while in the Job Corps program. The school-to-work initiative has provided students with important work skills while also providing the center with valuable feedback on each student's performance on the job. With this work experience under their belts, the students gain the confidence and skills necessary to seek employment upon termination.

The Placement Specialists' mission is to place students in full-time positions that match their training, but the reality is that students sometimes place themselves in non-related jobs. Students who are non-completers in their trade frequently do not have the skills to be placed in their field. The fact is that many students have never been employed prior to enrolling in Job Corps or have had a poor work history. Job Corps' mission is to provide students with the skills to become self-sufficient.

As a placement contractor, we do everything in our power to place students in positions that are job training matches. We provide them with job leads and employer names, and we discuss with them the importance of obtaining a job in their field. We remind them that their training has provided them the skills that will help them be successfully employed. There is a portion of students who choose not or are unable to find employment in their training field, but do find employment. Is this a successful placement? Yes. It is my belief that students learn very valuable skills at Job Corps including the motivation to find employment and be self-sufficient. It is also my belief that these youth may eventually seek out employment to match their Job Corps training.

In your invitation to testify, you mentioned that you wanted to understand the difference between a trained position placement and a training-related position. The definition of a job training match as stated in our Policy Requirements Handbook is as follows:

> Job training match is an assessment tool used to evaluate effectiveness of vocational training programs. Placement in a job requiring skills similar to those included in the student's training constitutes a job training match, and is determined by comparing the training D.O.T. code to the placement D.O.T. code on the 6-78 utilizing a crosswalk system. There are several placement codes that will result in a job training match for each training code. Training codes and placement codes that constitute a job training match are grouped in the *Job Corps Crosswalk Job Training Match Guide* for easy reference. Accurate reporting of training and placement codes is crucial to the determination of a job training match.

Let us take the example of a student who was trained as a carpenter. A job training match would occur if he were placed as a carpenter or any other job that would utilize skills developed during his training such as landscape gardener, drywall applicator or construction worker. Is a job-related match any less desirable than a perfect job match? No. The fact is that the youth will be better prepared and have greater opportunity for growth if the job is related to their training.

I want to emphasize again that Job Corps is designed to assist disadvantaged youth to become more responsible, employable and productive citizens. To this degree, Job Corps is quite successful. We are able to raise the employability of youth, many of whom were unemployable prior to their enrollment in Job Corps.

Your letter also stated that you would like to understand whether the current Department of Labor job classification designations are appropriate for job training matches. I would say yes; however, I do believe the categories we use are broader than they should be. Streamlining the categories of positions that constitute a job training match would produce a more accurate picture and more closely related job training matches.

The Department of Labor has set standards that we as placement contractors strive to meet or exceed. I believe these standards are necessary to provide accountability and measurable results. In reality, I do not believe there is a system anywhere else that can match the Job Corps measurement system. It is the measurement system that drives the behavior, and I believe this is a strength of the Job Corps program.

In an effort to continue this tradition of accountability, I would suggest the following changes:

- Measurement standards should be different for 16- and 17-year-olds as well as for non-completers.
- Only graduates of the program should be measured for job training matches.
- Disciplinary terminations (i.e., violence, drug use and non-participation) should be removed from our placement pool.
- Terminees who are not available to be placed (such as if they are jailed) should be removed from the placement pool.

Recommendations for Enhancing Job Corps Recruitment and Placement Services

1. The same contractor should be responsible for outreach, admissions and placement. This provides us with incentive to recruit youth who we believe will successfully complete the program. This continuity also allows us to begin the placement process during the admissions phase.

2. A placement staff person, wherever possible, should be located on centers where they can meet with the students on a regular basis and become more involved in their exit process. This also increases the students' chances of being placed prior to termination.

3. Centers should have school-to-work initiatives to provide students with valuable work experience and provide Placement Specialists with employer feedback on each student's employability.

4. Connections need to be made with employers, the military, community leaders, One-Stop Shops and employment services in order to provide a smoother transition from school to work. Close alliances with employers may also include employer input on curricula, labor market training, and potential employment opportunities.

5. Placement Counselors need to have access to state unemployment insurance information to verify a student's continued progress after leaving Job Corps.

6. Placement offices should have Internet access to enable students to search for employment opportunities in their own communities, even those located quite a distance from the center. This also allows us to begin counseling the student about job options and geographical employment issues.

7. A mutually beneficial relationship between Job Corps admissions and placement staff and One-Stop Shops should be promoted to enhance the opportunities available to Minnesota's youth.

8. Staffing needs to be increased in the rural areas to provide better support and more face-to-face contact with students and potential employers.

9. County-by-county court checks are difficult to accomplish with highly mobile applicants. A system needs to be developed to enhance our behavioral record checks. Court checks for 16- and 17-year-olds are a particular problem because court checks are not allowed for this age group.

10. Center tours should be conducted for potential students as part of the admissions process whenever possible.

In closing, I want to reiterate that Job Corps is a needed program for the disadvantaged youth. It has been a pleasure and an honor to be a part of a program that effectively assists young people to become successful.

I would like to tell you about one of the Humphrey Center's many success stories (see Attachment 6). In 1989, Kay Kleinschmidt graduated from the Humphrey Center. She went on to complete an Advanced Career Training program as a dental assistant and earn a bachelor's degree in biology. In 1995, she received her doctor of chiropractic degree and is currently working on a post-graduate degree in neurology. Dr. Kleinschmidt is now also in the process of setting up her own chiropractic office in St. Louis, Missouri. While Dr. Kleinschmidt may not be a typical Job Corps student, she certainly demonstrates how Job Corps enables youth to reach their full potential.

It is an incredible experience to see how youth are transformed to become confident, empowered, productive and contributing citizens, and I am proud to be part of their successes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

ATTACHMENT 1

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY JOB CORPS CENTER/DESI

OUTREACH REFERRAL

DATE

How did you hear about Job Corps?

Name

Address

Telephone Number Alternate #

Female ☐ Male ☐

Date of Birth Age

SS#

Highest grade completed Special Education?

Appeared in Court? Yes ☐ No ☐ On Probation?
Do you have any fines or restitution to pay?

Have you gone to the emergency room or been hospitalized overnight in the last four years? Yes ☐ No ☐ Comments:

Treatment? Mental Health ☐ Drug ☐ No ☐ Comments:

Children or Pregnant? Yes ☐ No ☐
Do you have daycare? Yes ☐ No ☐ Comments:

What is source of income?
Welfare ☐ General Assistance ☐

General Comments: ______________________________

(If applicant is 16-17 yr old, they must bring their school records with them to the interview.)

ATTACHMENT 2

JOB CORPS RECRUITMENT & PLACEMENT
C/O HUBERT H. HUMPHREY JCC
1480 N. SNELLING AVE.
ST. PAUL, MN 55108
(612) 642-1133 • 1-800-934-5627
FAX (612) 642-0123

TRAIN FOR YOUR FUTURE

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Today's date ______________________
Name ______________________ SS# ______________________
Age ______

All information on this questionnaire is confidential and is used to determine your eligibility, your ability to participate in the Job Corps program and services needed during your stay at the Job Corps Center. BE HONEST WITH YOUR ANSWERS AS WE DO BACKGROUND CHECKS.

◆ PERSONAL HISTORY ◆

1. List the names of the cities you have lived in over the past 3 years. ______________________
2. Name the school you last attended and when. ______________________
3. If you did not graduate from high school, why did you leave the high school program? ______________________
4. Did you receive any special education? ______________________
   If yes, do you have an active IEP? ______________________
5. Have you ever seen a psychologist or psychiatrist? ______________________
6. Have you ever been involved with any gang? ______________________
   If yes, name of gang, when and what city. ______________________
7. What is your most troubling health problem? ______________________
8. List any time you spent the night in the hospital or had to see a doctor for a period of time. When? Why? ______________________
9. Have you been a patient in the emergency room? When? Why? ______________________
10. Have you ever used drugs or alcohol? (Be honest, we will test you.) If yes, how often and what specifically do you use? ______________________

Operated for the U.S. Department of Labor by Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc.

11. Have you ever been to court for any reason? ______________________

12. How may times in your life have you been in court for the following offenses, even if the charges were later dropped?

	# OF CHARGES	AGE	CONVICTED?	
			YES	NO
a. Shoplifting/Theft	______	____	____	____
b. Parole/Probation Violation	______	____	____	____
c. Drug Charges	______	____	____	____
d. DWI	______	____	____	____
e. Public Intoxication	______	____	____	____
f. Forgery	______	____	____	____
g. Burglary, Larceny, B&E	______	____	____	____
h. Robbery	______	____	____	____
I. Assault	______	____	____	____
j. Arson	______	____	____	____
k. Homicide, Manslaughter	______	____	____	____
l. Vandalism	______	____	____	____
m. Other ____________	______	____	____	____

13. Are you presently awaiting charges, trial, or sentence? YES ____ NO ____ If yes, when and what for? ______________________

14. Are you currently on probation? YES ____ NO ____
If yes, please provide the following:
Probation Officer ______________________
Address & phone # ______________________

◆ JOB CORPS AND YOU ◆

1. How did you hear about Job Corps? ______________________
2. What are your vocational goals? ______________________
3. How can Job Corps help you reach your goals? ______________________
4. List your top three choices of the vocations we offer.
   1. ______________ 2. ______________
   3. ______________
5. What are your major concerns or doubts about coming to Job Corps? ______________________
6. Help others get their future on track. Please list names and numbers of people you feel could benefit from this program. ______________________

I (we) certify that the above information provided is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I (we) understand that any false statement or dishonest answer can be grounds for termination from Job Corps. I (we) understand that Job Corps is an educational and vocational program; it is not a program designed for people who only want their GED.

______________________ ______________________
Applicant's Signature Parent/Guardian Signature

______________________ ______________________
Admissions Counselor Date

ATTACHMENT 3

JOB CORPS RECRUITMENT & PLACEMENT
C/O HUBERT H. HUMPHREY JCC
1480 N. SNELLING AVE.
ST. PAUL, MN 55108
(612) 642-1133 • 1-800-934-5627
FAX (612) 642-0123

**TRAIN
FOR YOUR
FUTURE**

GUIDELINE FOR ESSAY

You have been asked to write an essay on why you want to enroll in Job Corps so that your Admissions Counselor can determine if you are a good candidate for the Job Corps Program.

Please use these questions as a guide to writing your essay.

7. What are your employment goals?
8. How can Job Corps help you reach your goals?
9. What do you expect to get from Job Corps?
10. What are some of the reasons why Job Corps should admit you as a student?
11. How do you feel about being in a program that has many rules (for example: no drugs, curfew and mandatory attendance)?
12. Is there anything else about you that we should know that would help us understand your willingness to make the commitment to complete your training at Job Corps?

We thank you for your honesty.

ATTACHMENT 4

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FAX (612) 642-0123

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CAPABILITY AND ASPIRATIONS ASSESSMENT TOOL (CAAT)

Applicant's Name: ______________________________

The Capability and Aspirations Assessment Tool (CAAT) must be completed for each applicant to ensure suitability to participate fully in the Job Corps Program. Assessment must be made of the applicant's personal commitment, attitude and capability to fulfill program requirements. The Admissions Counselor should circle the appropriate response for each factor, based on personal observation, document review and other relevant information. If a particular factor is not applicable to the applicant, circle N/A. (Items listed under each factor are intended as examples of the types of information which may be used by the Admissions Counselor in assessing the applicant's suitability, and are not required to be included for each applicant.)

A. Commitment

1.	Applicant showed commitment by meeting scheduled appointments, or call ins, in a timely manner.	Always Usually Sometimes Never N/A
2.	Applicant showed commitment by securing requested documentation: e.g., medical, court records, immunization records, birth certificate, social security cards, etc.	Always Usually Sometimes Never N/A
3.	Applicant understood and reacted favorable to program requirements, for example: ▸ Center rules ▸ Zero tolerance policy ▸ Daily center life ▸ Living with ethnic and cultural diversity ▸ Signing consent forms ▸ Living away from home ▸ Living allowance	Always Usually Sometimes Never N/A

B. Attitude

1. Applicant demonstrated personal interest by:
   - Willingly responding to questions
   - Behaving respectfully during interview
   - Showing personal initiative to seek enrollment

Always
Usually
Sometimes
Never
N/A

C. Capability

1. Documentation (verbal or written), as available supported the applicant's capability to fully benefit from Job Corps, for example:
   - School records
   - Recommendations
   - Former employer letter
   - Court records
   - Mental health records
   - Medical records
   - Applicant's goal statement
   - Child care plan
   - Previous Job Corps enrollment

Always
Usually
Sometimes
Never
N/A

D. Compatibility of Applicant/Program Goals

1. Applicant's expressed goals can be realistically achieved through Job Corps participation, for example: Yes No
   - Job/school placement
   - Vocational training
   - Academic education
   - Social skills development

ADMISSIONS COUNSELOR ASSESSMENT:

Applicant demonstrates sufficient capability and aspirations to successfully participate in the Job Corps program. Yes No

(Provide summary justification with specific examples, based on the above, for determining either a "YES" or a "NO" response.)

Applicant's Signature

Date

ATTACHMENT 5

JOB CORPS RECRUITMENT & PLACEMENT
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ST. PAUL, MN 55108
(612) 642-1133 • 1-800-934-5627
FAX (612) 642-0123

TRAIN
FOR YOUR
FUTURE

Dear Employer,

The following person is a former student of the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center. This is a program designed to provide students with the vocational skills necessary to obtain gainful employment.

Our policy is to verify employment of all former students for a period of six months after their termination. We will be collecting information on wage, hours, title and other information that would assist our placement office in providing necessary support to the student.

RELEASE:

I, ______________________________, give my written authorization to release all information concerning my employment to the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center.

______________________________ ______________________

Signature Date

Thank you very much for your assistance. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (612) 645-7448.

____

Placement Specialist

ATTACHMENT 6

The following article is reprinted from the winter 1997 issue of *The Completer*, the newsletter of the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center. The author is Chris Kuhn.

Practice Makes Perfect

Ten years after arriving at HHHJCC as a new student
Kay Kleinschmidt opens her own chiropractic clinic

It's a waiting game now. The office space first has to be vacated and the bank loan processed before the new furniture and equipment can be moved in. The sign should go up sometime in April–including the one that reads "Grand Opening." Finally, after years of hard work, Kay Kleinschmidt is about to take ownership of her long-awaited dream: Opening her own medical practice.

"I stepped foot in my new office for the first time today," shared Dr. Kleinschmidt recently from her home in greater St. Louis. "It's a great feeling–almost overwhelming–to know that in another couple of months I'll have my own business. I'm ecstatic!"

Kay has been busy working toward this goal since she graduated from Job Corps in 1989. After completing the dental assistant program at Northeast Metro Technical College through the center's Advanced Career Training program, she went on to earn a bachelor's degree in biology from Marion College in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Kay continued her studies at Logan Chiropractic College, in Chesterfield, Missouri, receiving her doctor of chiropractic degree in 1995. "School will never end for me," says Kay, who is currently working on a post-graduate degree in neurology.

A member of the American Chiropractic Association and the Illinois Chiropractic Society, Kay just passed the state licensure exam to practice in Missouri. She had worked as an associate at the Eastland Chiropractic Center in Bloomington, Illinois, for nine months before deciding to move out on her own. "This is an opportunity to practice the way I want and to reach more people," explains Kay, who picked a visible location in a strip mall for her clinic site.

Actively involved with WICS (Women in Community Service) during her stay in Job Corps, Kay looks back with gratitude. "I'm not sure I would be where I am today if I hadn't started at HHHJCC 10 years ago." *Oh, Kay!*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ATTACHMENT 7

SARAH P. ROBINSON

Education

- M.S., Guidance and Counseling, University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie, Wisconsin.
- B.S., Vocational Rehabilitation, University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie, Wisconsin.

Employment History

May 1993 to Present. Manager of Outreach, Admissions and Placement, Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc., Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center, St. Paul, Minnesota. Responsible for overall supervision and administration of project including staff training, public relations, marketing and contract obligations. Recognized by the Department of Labor, Region V, for outstanding outreach, admissions and placement services in PY 94, PY 95 and PY 96.

January 1992 to May 1993. Sales Representative, GTE, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Established new business accounts, made sales and marketing presentations, monitored market and responded to competitive changes. Named Sales Representative of the Month twice in one year for outstanding sales. Met 97 percent of quota in recessionary economy.

September 1989 to May 1991 and October 1986 to December 1987. Sales Representative, TOMA Publishing/Skyway Publications, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Established new business accounts via extensive sales canvassing for new publications. Designed advertisements for clients. Significantly contributed to a rapid growth of advertising volume. Consistently performed as top sales representative for company.

Task Force Membership

- National Task Force on Eligibility Criteria. (1993)
- National Task Force for PRH Chapter One. (1994)
- National Trainer for New Eligibility Requirements. (1994)
- National Task Force for Improving Admissions Procedures. (1996)

Speaking Engagements

- National Executive Seminar Series for Developing Partnerships. (1997)
- National One-Stop Shop Conference. (1997)
- Region IV Conference on Improving Placement Systems. (1996)
- Region V Conference on Work Force Development Demonstration Project in Rochester. (1996)

ATTACHMENT 8

Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc. (DESI), is a subcontractor to the Vinnell Corporation (12150 E. Monument Drive, Fairfax, Virginia, 22033) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center. Vinnell is the prime contractor with the Department of Labor, Region V, Chicago, Illinois, for this contract. Vinnell has selected DESI to provide the outreach, admissions and placement services that are required in the RFP.

Below is the funding amount which DESI has invoiced to the Vinnell Corporation during the last three years.

Minnesota Outreach, Admissions and Placement
Subcontract VC467-93-001

Contract Year	Amount of Funding
June 1, 1995 – May 31, 1996	$362,485
June 1, 1996 – May 31, 1997	$375,862
June 1, 1997 – May 31, 1998	$389,876

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much. I will look forward to talking to you both about the type of student you are having to serve and questions related to that.

Miss Young.

Ms. YOUNG. Congressman Shays and distinguished members of the committee, I am Mary Young, Director of the David L. Carrasco Job Corps Center in El Paso, TX. I joined the center staff prior to the center's opening in 1970.

The center has been operated since its inception by TEF, Inc., the corporation that also has operated the Gary Job Corps Center in San Marcos, TX since it opened in 1965. The third center operated by TEF is located in Gainesville, FL.

Our center is named for our founding director of 20 years, David L. Carrasco, who established the philosophy which continues to serve as the basis for the success of our center and its graduates. This philosophy is based on the firm belief that young people with very bleak futures can be empowered to drastically change the direction of their lives through a transformation which occurs as they progress through the program.

It is my understanding that you are interested in Job Corps recruitment and placement activities. I will describe some of our practices and activities in these areas.

It has long been recognized that the Carrasco Center is unique in a number of ways. Most of our students are from the local community. This enables us to involve parents in the recruitment process and in the progress of their sons and daughters once they enter the center.

Two entities provide recruitment and placement services for the Carrasco Center. These are the Texas Workforce Commission and our own admissions and placement staff, who work under the auspices of the DOL contract issued to TEF, Inc. This latter arrangement gives TEF and center administrators important control over recruitment and placement activities.

The standards of the Carrasco Center are high and are projected to prospective enrollees. The recruitment process involves what we call hurdles—keeping appointments on time, submitting required documents promptly, and complying with the center's dress and grooming code.

One of the practices which contributes strongly to the success of Carrasco Center students is the preorientation program. This 1-day activity enables applicants to visit the center, observe classes, converse with students and staff and be interviewed by center administrators. At the conclusion of the day, the applicant has sufficient information and staff guidance to make an intelligent decision regarding an enrollment commitment.

This is not a creaming process. Center staff members make every effort to determine how the potential enrollee can succeed in the program.

A number of individuals come to mind who, by all reasonable expectations, should not have been Job Corps successes. I will refer to one graduate, Eddie Hall, who recently addressed our Community Relations Council. Eddie received a standing ovation at the conclusion of his speech, in which he described his struggles with his attention deficit disorder. Not only does Eddie have this disorder; he also has a physical deformity in his spinal structure.

He saw Job Corps as his last hope. Through his exceptional determination and the special help of many center staff, he completed the Job Corps program and has earned an associate degree in criminal justice from El Paso Community College.

Typically, youth seeking to enter the center have no job skills and an inadequate academic education. However, I confidently promise orientation students that, if they will commit a year of their lives to this program, they will possess employment skills which will enable them to obtain and hold a job. I also promise that they will earn either a high school diploma or a GED certificate of high school equivalency.

A tremendous longevity exists in our staff but as we employ new staff members, we ask two questions. Does the prospective employee possess the required job skills? And, most importantly, does he or she meet the center standard of caring for and serving students? I am proud to tell you that 25 of our 140 staff positions are filled by our graduates, including two members of our senior management team.

Job placement for a Carrasco Center student begins on the day of enrollment. Actually, the placement commitment is secured prior to enrollment.

Counselors at our center are members of the counseling and placement activities department. It is the counselor's responsibility to develop the entire spectrum of employability skills in the student and to assist with the student's placement.

These staff members are not the only ones involved in student placement. Every center employee is assigned an objective as part of the annual performance appraisal process which requires them to submit job placement leads. And, vocational training instructors are given released time to go out into the community and obtain placements for their graduates.

I am perplexed by the comparison of a trained position placement and a training-related position placement. I don't really know what the first term means, but a training-related placement is an employment position that is related to the vocational training course the young person has completed. This determination is made by comparing the job to jobs related to the vocational course completed, as listed in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles.

I have focused on the uniqueness of the Carrasco Center and some of our practices that have been effective in preparing our students to be productive. I am proud to say that our center has consistently been evaluated as one of the highest performing Job Corps Centers in the Nation.

Since the outreach, admissions and placement function was added as part of the contractual responsibility of TEF, Inc., excellence also has been achieved in this area. In the announcement of the National Job Corps Director's Awards for the 1996 program year, the Carrasco Center was recognized for top performance in that year and for sustained excellent performance in program years 1994 to 1996.

The center also was accorded the Student Safety Seal of Accomplishment because of the results of student satisfaction surveys.

And the TEF Outreach, Admissions and Placement operation received three awards: best overall center outreach and admissions performance; attainment of commitment standard, which relates to student retention; and, attainment of female arrival goal of 100 or more.

The impact of any Job Corps Center can best be measured by the success of its graduates. I can attest to the fact that more than 12,000 graduates of the David L. Carrasco Job Corps Center have been gainfully employed by many companies, both in El Paso and throughout the country.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you about the recruitment and placement of our students and I will be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Young follows:]

TESTIMONY TO BE PRESENTED

TO THE CONGRESSIONAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT

October 23, 1997

Congressman Shays and distinguished members of the committee, I am Mary Young, Director of the David L. Carrasco Job Corps Center in El Paso, Texas. I joined the Center staff prior to the Center's opening in 1970.

The Center has been operated since its inception by TEF, Inc., the corporation that also has operated the Gary Job Corps Center in San Marcos, Texas, since it opened in 1965. The third Center operated by TEF is located in Gainesville, Florida.

Our Center is named for our founding director of 20 years, David L. Carrasco, who established the philosophy which continues to serve as the basis for the success of our Center and its graduates. This philosophy is based on the firm belief that young people with very bleak futures can be empowered to drastically change the direction of their lives through a transformation which occurs as they progress through the program.

It is my understanding that you are interested in Job Corps recruitment and placement activities. I will describe some of our practices and activities in these areas.

It has long been recognized that the Carrasco Center is unique in a number of ways. Most of our students are from the local community. This enables us to involve parents in the recruitment process and in the progress of their sons and daughters once they enter the Center.

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Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you about the recruitment and placement of our students. I will be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much.

Sergeant Bethea, you are next. I would just comment that usually when we see a sergeant, they are dressed in their navy blue uniforms or white uniforms. Now I get to see how a sergeant dresses when he is not on duty. You look pretty terrific.

Mr. BETHEA. Well, I got a field promotion.

Mr. SHAYS. It is great to have you here.

Mr. BETHEA. Thank you. I want to thank Chairman Shays and other members of this committee for inviting me to talk about how Job Corps helped me.

My name is Jerry Bethea. I am currently an officer for the District of Columbia and very proud of the work I do. Years ago when I was 21, it was different for me. I grew up in D.C. I dropped out of school and, quite frankly, I never finished anything I started. Realizing I was no longer a kid, but an adult, I became restless. I was working in a job without opportunity. Then my stepfather recommended Job Corps.

I read about how Job Corps provided education and training and job placement, so I visited the Department of Employment Services in D.C. and enrolled in the Potomac Job Corps Center in Southwest in April 1992. At the time, I was still uncertain what I wanted to do with my future, but I wanted to set a course. While at Job Corps, all the pieces started to fall into place.

First, I completed my GED. Next, I enrolled in the center's landscaping program, which was offered to me by the Home Builders Institute. My instructor was very instrumental in helping me set my goals. For the first time, I was setting goals and achieving them. Once I completed a goal, it inspired me to set another. I won awards for my performance.

My instructor noticed that I was also interested in law enforcement. The D.C. Police Department had at the time its fire and police clinic on the Potomac Job Corps campus. We would see the police cruisers and officers going into it all the time. Often I would try to ask them about their jobs.

It was actually my landscape instructor who encouraged me to pursue my dreams of becoming a police officer. He helped me fill out the forms and he also provided sound advice. One thing Job Corps does is instill in students personal responsibility. I knew that if I completed Job Corps, I would get a good job as a landscaper, which I did, but I also wanted to keep other professional career options open, like becoming a police officer, so I sent the forms in in 1992.

In January 1993, I was hired by Winn Management Corp., as a groundsman/maintenance assistant. I was assigned as a full-time employee at Atlantic Gardens complex in Southeast D.C. I worked there for a year while also working part-time as a barber. In October of that same year I decided to work full-time as a barber at the House Barber Shop. It was during this time that I was first contacted by the D.C. Police Department and they began their extensive background check process.

Finally in October 1994, nearly 2 years from when I first filled out my application forms with the assistance of my Job Corps instructor, I was accepted into the Academy for Police Training. Today I am very happily employed with the District of Columbia

Police Department and I am assigned to the Public Housing Division. I truly feel that the training and life experiences I received from Job Corps have helped me be effective in my job today.

I would like to conclude by telling you and the committee that I feel that Job Corps was an important turning point in my life. It worked so well for me that I recommended it for my sister. She, too, benefits greatly from Potomac Job Corps Center. She graduated as an advanced completer in nursing and is now in college pursuing a nursing career.

Job Corps was good to me and that is why I still visit Potomac Job Corps to speak to the students enrolled there. They are just like I was many years ago. It is important for them to see that the path you take to finding a career can take different routes. The final decision of whether they will be successful really relies on their own ambition, goal-setting and determination to use their own skills. Job Corps helps them sort through it all. It did it for me and it can do it for them. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bethea follows:]

STATEMENT OF
JERRY BETHEA
Before the Congress of the United States
Subcommittee on Human Resources
October 23, 1997

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Thank you.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much, Sergeant. It is very nice to have all of you here.

I will have questions for all of you, but let me first start by understanding the limited job opportunities that GAO reports on as 1 of the 11 criteria, I want to place it first. It is 1 of the 11. There is a question as to how it is interpreted. Some would view it as whether or not the applicant has the job skills or the educational background and others would view it as the economic condition of the geographic area. How do you view it, each of you, or do you even pay attention to it?

See, I am just going to preface this by saying in some ways I almost feel it is irrelevant because you are dealing with such—you know, we are not fine-tuning it. Given that you have 600 applicants and you are taking 1 percent of the large pool that is there, you have 60,000 students.

So I guess my first question is, how significant is this question and how do you interpret it? How significant is the concept of limited job opportunities and how do you interpret it? Let's just go down the line.

Mr. CROSBY. Congressman, I would interpret it as limited job opportunities.

Mr. SHAYS. So from an economic standpoint?

Mr. CROSBY. From an economic standpoint.

Mr. SHAYS. Not from a skills standpoint.

Mr. CROSBY. The skills standpoint would come into play but just the basic wording of what you just said, it would be, to me, limited job opportunities.

Like Congressman Barrett mentioned, in his part of the country there is high unemployment, so those youngsters would certainly have limited job opportunities.

Mr. SHAYS. So you view it more on the economic side of it.

Mr. CROSBY. Yes, sir.

Mr. SHAYS. That there aren't many opportunities, economic opportunities, not many available jobs.

How do you view it, Miss Robinson?

Ms. ROBINSON. We see it that the applicant has limited skills to enable them to obtain or keep gainful, meaningful employment, but it also could mean—it does mean that there may be unemployment in the community that they reside in.

Mr. SHAYS. Miss Young.

Ms. YOUNG. I have always interpreted that as being a lack of preparation for a job in the person, not having the job skills or education to acquire and hold a job.

Mr. SHAYS. So Miss Robinson, you start with the lack of jobs available but you include both? You basically look at jobs available; you include both and you include more the educational skill background the person has.

Ms. YOUNG. Definitely.

Mr. SHAYS. And you are not given much more guidance. It is left to your interpretation, I gather.

Ms. YOUNG. It is, but I think it relates to whether or not the applicant needs the program. In my interpretation, he or she needs the program because he or she does not possess the job skills to acquire the job.

Mr. SHAYS. Given that this was a part of the question, I want to answer it. If I were interpreting it, I think I would basically do both. In other words, there clearly would have to be limited skills because there are some jobs available for some people if they have the skills to take them. So I would think almost in any urban area we could argue that we have an overabundance of unemployed 16- to 24-year-olds. So that test would be no test because everybody meets it.

Then the next question, it would seem to me, is do they have, for the few jobs that are there, do they have the skills to have those jobs? So I would probably have focused more on the skills side of it.

Basically, Sergeant Bethea, you were part of the new generation of Job Corps that fits the kind of dialog that I read when I come to your comment:

> Today it is a very different situation. The routine has gone. The make-up of students has turned upside down. They are younger, down to age 16. They come from dysfunctional families. They have either one or no parent. Fathers are never seen or heard from. The students' social and health experiences have produced personalities based on poor self-image and absence of motivation, illiteracy, chemical dependency and criminal activity.

Would it be fair to say that the generation that you find yourself in would fit this criteria?

Mr. BETHEA. That I find myself personally?

Mr. SHAYS. Whether your peers would fit this: "There often seems to be no concept of what you and I know as a work ethic."

Mr. BETHEA. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. And Miss Robinson, your comments,

> We must remember that we are working with disadvantaged youth, youth who have few, if any support networks, youth who live in horrendous conditions at home and in communities where it is common to hear gunfire and see drug-dealing. We work with youth who have experienced a great amount of failure in their lives. When they hear about Job Corps, they begin to visualize some hope for the future.

Did you have any job before you went into Job Corps?

Mr. BETHEA. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. So you had some sense of a work ethic, in your own environment. Can I ask you what those jobs were?

Mr. BETHEA. Basically it was the same. It was a retail store, Murray's Steaks. That is where I worked.

Mr. SHAYS. Did you get to work on time before Job Corps? Did you have a basic work ethic, do you think?

Mr. BETHEA. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. It would be interesting. You are a clear success story and the burden of the world is on you because you are representing all of them here, and there have been thousands who have gone through the program. We rejoice in your success.

But would you describe yourself as typical, above average in terms of the potential that you presented to the Job Corps? Did you bring more to that facility than most probably did? Did you have a mom or a dad or an uncle or brother who had a "get off your ass and get to work," attitude?

Mr. BETHEA. OK.

Mr. SHAYS. You had a little bit of that in your life beforehand.

Let me ask all three of you, since Miss Young, I didn't pick up in your statement the same kind of reflection as both Mr. Crosby and Miss Robinson, would you describe the students, the young people that you have as being similar? And have you been in the program long enough to have seen a difference?

Ms. YOUNG. Yes, I have a total of 29 years in the Job Corps program, but I was very young when I started.

Mr. SHAYS. Why am I laughing? It is just that that is a typical comment said by anyone.

Ms. YOUNG. Seriously, I agree with Mr. Crosby totally. Our students—we are ranked as one of the most successful centers in the country—but that does not mean that we have students without problems. We have students with tremendous problems. Very few of our parents are a pair. Most of them are single parents, the woman in the home.

Recently I have seen a tremendous increase in our population in terms of both sexual and physical abuse and sometimes a combination of both. And tremendous burdens, horrific home situations from which they come.

The young man whom I am very proud to have here with me today, he speaks of it as his past life and his past life was full of terrible things, terrible things. But he has been with us a year and a month and he is graduating this month and I have full confidence that this young man and the majority of our graduates will be like Sergeant Bethea, successes, largely because of their turnaround in the Job Corps program.

Mr. SHAYS. I have hired a few individuals who have basically come off welfare. One was a rough situation at first. I hired this young woman who graduated from high school but had been raised where she had really never had a job before but wanted one. I ended up hiring her because she said something that touched me. She spoke to me. Unfortunately, the story didn't end positively but I said, "What happens if you fail?" She said, "I'll try harder the next time." So that was a wonderful thing.

What was the challenge, though, was that working in my congressional office, the first phone call was from a veteran and she did exactly what we asked her to do. "If you don't know what someone is telling you, ask. Ask them to spell out the name. Ask them a question." She did it perfectly and she said, "Excuse me; what's a veteran?" I immediately had to contend with veterans around my district who said, "This office is so screwed up his staff doesn't even know what we are."

But we continued to work with her for 6 months and we said, "As long as you continue to make progress, you've got a job." It was ever so slight. Ultimately, she just gave up, which was sad.

Another one, though, ended up coming off the same kind of circumstance and ends up now she bought a house. I wanted someone on my staff to go to the housing fair that we had. She wasn't scheduled to be on duty but I said, "I really think you should come and hear about it and we need your help." So she came and a month later, she didn't even ask me; she ends up buying a house. By asking I mean, you know, she didn't even boast to me that she was doing it. The next thing I know she had listened and she figured out how she and her brother and sister could buy a home. They bought a very nice home in one of our urban areas. So it is interesting.

I am going to ask Cherri Branson if you have any questions you would like to ask. This would be the minority staff that I would like to participate in this and ask questions.

Ms. BRANSON. Thank you, Mr. Shays.

Let's see. I think first of all, I wanted to ask the Center Directors whether they believe that the difference in the students they saw before and the students they see now, what role drugs in the communities have played in the difference that people show in presenting themselves to your centers.

Ms. YOUNG. I will go ahead. One of the terrible differences that we have noted, and this is part of the horror of the family life that our students come from, is that sometimes when a student whom we have has a substance abuse problem and we, as usual, attempt to bring the parents into it, sometimes the student is getting it from the parents.

So, consequently, our solution to that is that they will reside at the center and truly extricate themselves from the family environment, even though the family lives in town.

Mr. CROSBY. You bring up a very interesting question, the fact that the drugs do have an impact on the students. It is just a different time we live in. The Job Corps had a wonderful drug rehab program within its organization but then we were given direction that one strike and you are out as far as the kids are concerned.

There is no other program like it in America. I mean, the 12-step method and support groups give you more than one chance. Now Job Corps doesn't do that, and we were very successful in working with young people who had drug problems. We had counselors working with them and, for the most part, we were very successful. It is an unfortunate part of our culture today and it is something that certainly needs to be addressed, along with the other things that Ms. Young has mentioned. We live in a different time now.

Ms. BRANSON. I wanted to ask Mr. Bethea if he thought that—I noticed that you were 21 when you started in Job Corps. Therefore you were probably older than a lot of the people who were there. Do you think that that age difference may have made some difference in how you approached Job Corps training?

Mr. BETHEA. Yes, it did because it was like I was 21 and if I didn't complete this, I wasn't going to complete anything. Yes, it made a difference.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Towns, she was in front of you.

Mr. TOWNS. Any time. She does a superb job.

Do you believe that welfare reform, the work requirement, will have any effect on your programs?

Ms. ROBINSON. Are you asking me?

Mr. TOWNS. All of you. I'm going to go right down the line. Everybody except Mr. Bethea.

Mr. SHAYS. I'd like all the witnesses to answer that.

Ms. YOUNG. I think it will. I think it will be an impetus to applicants to look at Job Corps perhaps even more so than they do now because there will be requirements that will require them to enter the work force. As somebody referred to it, the welfare safety net will not be there.

I could give an example. I always remember a particular student who, when she got her first paycheck as a switchboard operator, came and said very, very proudly, "I am the first member of my family to be able to relinquish welfare."

I think we make a mistake if we think that our clientele wants to remain on welfare. I don't think they do, for the most part.

Mr. TOWNS. Yes?

Ms. ROBINSON. In Minnesota, for those women who are on welfare, and I don't know if this is Nation-wide but Job Corps is considered a training program, not a work program. What that means is that a woman must also work full-time in addition to working at Job Corps full-time. That is virtually impossible to do. Job Corps is a full-time program, 8 a.m. to 3:40 p.m. Monday through Friday, and they would have to work another 30 hours a week to meet the work requirements to have their day care provided for them and to be in Job Corps.

So we have had significant difficulties bringing in those folks that are on welfare and the welfare reform has not helped. Prior to welfare reform, a woman who wanted to come to Job Corps was able to obtain day care while going to Job Corps without having the work requirement.

Mr. CROSBY. I pretty well second what they have both said, as far as maybe the disadvantages of this program now, especially the impact on child care. It is just a very tough situation to deal with right now, as it was before that.

Mr. TOWNS. Right. Many of you have students that come from all over the country. Do you feel that if they come from far away, that they have a tendency to stay with the program? Or do you think that training locally would be better?

Mr. CROSBY. At Clearfield we have a tremendous mix. We have students from every State in the Union. Like I mentioned in my testimony, we are also a center for refugees. We have students from 25 foreign countries.

So what we have found is that the tours that are given to the different students who are interested in Job Corps, if they are 18 and older and they come to Clearfield they say, "Wow, look at this menu of opportunities" but if they are 16 and 17-year-olds they go to the smaller center and say, "What a neat little safe harbor for me to get into."

So, in my opinion, I think it depends on the age of the student. If they're 16 or 17 years old I would encourage them to stay closer to home but if they are older, the opportunities are all over the country to go into the vocational trade that they truly want.

Mr. TOWNS. Do you want to comment on that?

Ms. ROBINSON. The region 5 Department of Labor has initiated an 80 percent in-state enrollment initiative, which means that 80 percent of the students at any given center in region 5 are going to be from that State that the center is located in.

This is a policy that we are very supportive of because we believe, as admissions counselors, that the better prepared a youth is to enroll in Job Corps, the more likely it is that they are going to stay.

So we make it mandatory for every student within the 30-mile radius to see the center and attend what we call pre-orientation to Job Corps. We are also able to really become experts in our center, so that we can really, really fully prepare youth for Job Corps prior, even if they are not located nearby.

However, it is also important to note that we want to make sure that we provide the maximum opportunity for every youth. So if they are interested in a vocation we do not offer, such as brick masonry or carpentry or electricity, we are certainly going to ensure that we are going to send them to the center where their needs are going to be met vocationally.

Mr. TOWNS. And if it is somebody from New York you might not be able to do that.

Ms. ROBINSON. They might not be able to do what?

Mr. TOWNS. If your students were from New York, you would not be able to do those things?

Ms. ROBINSON. If the student is residing in New York they would not be able to do——

Mr. TOWNS. No, if we send a person from New York to your center. Let me back up and ask the question. If we are talking about youngsters coming from all over the country to your State, at many job centers they have children that come from all over, the question I am asking you is—let's use Connecticut. If the student was from Connecticut and enrolled in your center, you would not be able to do the things that you just described?

Ms. ROBINSON. No, no, they would not be able to tour the center. Also, the admissions counselor from Connecticut—we recruit just for region 5 centers, which covers States in the Midwest area, so that we can really understand those centers.

But I, for example, haven't visited the Cincinnati Job Corps Center, so I may not be able to prepare the youth as well as I would like to, to go to Cincinnati from Minnesota.

So we become experts at our center and that is what I think part of the Humphrey strength is, is that our students are well prepared for our program.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me ask you to answer that question.

Ms. YOUNG. For us it has been a tremendous advantage to have local students in our center. However, I also agree with what Mr. Crosby has said because some of our students have gone to his center for the advanced training programs that he has there and these typically are the older students. It has been a very great advantage for our operation to have students from the local area in the center.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you.

Mr. Bethea, I don't want to depress you but have you ever thought about what your life would be like if you had not gone to Job Corps?

Mr. BETHEA. Yes, I have. It could have taken several avenues but to sit up here and think about it, I just enjoy what I do. I am glad I went there. I recommend it to anybody that comes up to me that doesn't have any idea of what they want to do or where they are going to go. I tell them I went through it; they can do it. I don't even fathom the idea of where I could have been. I could have taken a turn for the worst.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me just say this in closing. We are so happy that you didn't and we are happy that you are doing the kinds of things that you are doing and we are very proud of you. I think that you don't realize how much you are doing for programs across the Nation when you come here and you testify to the Members of Congress in terms of what it has meant to you. That, to me, means a great deal.

So I want to thank you for it and I want to thank all of the directors for the job that you are doing out there in the field.

So Mr. Chairman, on that note I yield back.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much for yielding back. We are just going to be coming to a conclusion here.

I just want a quick question, Mr. Bethea, Sergeant, rather. Sergeant, in answer to the question about welfare reform, do you think the whole emphasis on trying to encourage, in many cases, young women to get into the work force is a positive thing and something that the Job Corps can take a role in?

Mr. BETHEA. Yes, I do.

Mr. SHAYS. I have a relatively quick question; I don't know if the answer will be quick. You basically had a group of peers who you enjoyed their company. When you went through Job Corps, did you find yourself not having those same friends? I mean, in a few instances were some of your peers saying what a silly thing, for you to want to better your life or be a part of this program?

Mr. BETHEA. I went through that. It was like a 50/50 situation. The ones that were truly my friends stuck with me and encouraged me, but the ones that weren't went by the wayside, so they weren't my friends.

Mr. SHAYS. Now, having gone through the program and now having become a police officer, do you still have some of your same friends? You have moved your life along in a certain way.

Mr. BETHEA. The same friends I had when I was in Job Corps are the same friends I have now.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. I would like to, if it is all right with you, Mr. Towns, I would like Mr. Chase to ask one question and then we will close.

Mr. TOWNS. Sure.

Mr. CHASE. Again this is for you, Sergeant. Can you help us by describing the process that you went through to decide that the Job Corps was for you? What kind of questions did they ask you? What did they tell you that they expected of you in the program? And did you have a sense of what you wanted to get out of the program?

Mr. BETHEA. You are talking about when I went down to Employment Services initially?

Mr. CHASE. Yes, when you went to the Job Corps counselor, the admissions counselor, what kind of questions did they ask you?

Mr. BETHEA. It is vague. I cannot recall exactly what he asked me but I already knew what I wanted. I wanted a GED and a trade, so I was focussed on that, and I got it.

Mr. CROSBY. Mr. Chairman, could I make an observation?

Mr. SHAYS. Sure.

Mr. CROSBY. I wish Mr. Snowbarger were back because he had some questions about the followup to training. When I graduated from college, much to the shock of my parents——

Mr. SHAYS. That you graduated?

Mr. CROSBY. Yes, sir.

Mr. SHAYS. That is probably a typical response of some parents.

Mr. CROSBY. They partied for a week. I went to work as a common laborer. And if anybody was doing a followup on John Crosby after he graduated from college, well, John Crosby is a failure because he went to work as a common laborer, because there was no job match.

Five months later I quit that job and it would have shown up on some statistical report, well, not only is he a failure because he doesn't have a job match; he quit the job. Then I went into the field of my choice.

So I think that is important. I think we have to really take a look at this, the credibility of the followup. How far down the line do we truly have to go? I think the proposal now is 13 weeks. Again, if they had done it on John Crosby, he would have been a failure. So I would just like to have that in the record.

Mr. SHAYS. That will be in the record.

Let me just say, with the permission of the ranking member and his concurrence, we are going to invite Elias Moreno, who is a recent Job Corps graduate who was mentioned by Mary Silva, a graduate, I guess, in El Paso, TX, just to give us some observations he might have. Were you in Job Corps? Do I have that correct?

Mr. TOWNS. I think he is still in it.

Mr. MORENO. I am in Job Corps.

Mr. SHAYS. You are still in Job Corps. Well, we are not swearing you in. We are not putting you at the witness table but we are going to invite you to just give us your observation, if you would like to. It is nice to have you here.

Mr. MORENO. Well, before I first went into Job Corps I suffered child abuse and child neglect from both my parents. There was a point when my mother took me out of high school. I only went 4 weeks. She dropped me off for no reason and abandoned me. I didn't go to school for a whole year, which I donated my time to go to middle schools, elementary schools and help other students as in tutoring or counseling, if possible.

How I found out about Job Corps was by one of the counselors in one of the schools. I was so excited because I was going back to education, but there was a problem. I didn't have a parent's signature nor a guardian. I looked for my father all over. I found him and he did sign legal guardianship to another person.

I was happy. The first day I was interviewed to get into Job Corps was one of the happiest days of my life. When I walked in Job Corps, the first thing I saw was people with their arms wide open saying, "Come in and we will help you toward your education and anything you need."

Now that I am going to graduate, I feel like I don't want to go because for me, they are my parents. I never had real parents and for me, they were there when I needed them. They were there whenever I needed them and there is nothing that will separate me from being with Job Corps.

I am planning on going to Phoenix, AZ, to go to technical school and transferring to a college. My goal is to get a doctoral degree in computer science. I would like to go back to Job Corps and volunteer my time to be a counselor to all students and telling them there is always an opportunity there for you and there will always be somebody behind you, pushing you, in order to go forward. They will never let you fall behind.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, we could ask some more questions or we could adjourn.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me just make a comment, Mr. Chairman. That was a very powerful, powerful statement. To me, it points out that it is really, really worth it. I want to thank you for taking the time to come by and to allow us to meet you and to hear from you.

And, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for your creativity, knowing that he was not a part of the panel, that you felt to ask him to make comments. I think I want to applaud you for that, too, because we could have gone without hearing that and I am so happy that I had an opportunity to hear it. So thank you.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, thank you. I would like to say the same thing and just that I thought it was a nice way to end up. And unless there are any comments, we appreciate all the witnesses, all three panels, and we very much appreciate your observations and contribution, Mr. Moreno. Thank you.

Mr. MORENO. Thank you.

Mr. SHAYS. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:40 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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